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Welcome *meet the team*



Editor Louise Kittle started riding aged six. She's a qualified BHS IntSM and owns Cino, a 20-year-old Irish gelding. Together they have competed in all disciplines, but Cino's first love is going cross-country.

Editor's letter

Welcome to January *Horse&Rider*. For most of us, the competition season has finished, but that's no excuse for giving up on your schooling. The winter is a great time to sort out those niggling issues with your riding and, as always, *Horse&Rider* is here to help. Don't miss our seven ways to improve your feel on p24 – it will help you **tune in to your horse** and get the best from him every time. If a lack of confidence is holding you back, then turn to p54 to uncover **three great ways to help stop those nerves** on p108. If, like me, you have been battling mud fever this winter, you can't afford to miss our definitive veterinary guide to treating and managing this horrible condition. Turn to p88 to get started. I followed the advice and Cino's mud fever cleared up in 10 days – let me know how you get on! I hope you enjoy this issue and I'll see you again in February *Horse&Rider*.

Louise

Céleste Wilkins

Staff Writer

Says: "What's more satisfying than taking a youngster you've produced yourself to his first shows? I really enjoyed finding out how to have a great time and be competitive with top rider, Yazmin Pinchen (p32)."



Follow Céleste on Twitter
@hr_insider

Jane Gazzard

Deputy Editor



skills, too. Dressage trainer Steve Wallace has some tried-and-trusted tips for putting you on track with traver, on p42."

Follow Jane on Twitter
@horseandrideruk

Lucy Turner

Assistant Editor

Says: "I have to admit, I'm a complete grooming fiend. And although winter makes keeping horses looking nice a challenge, I can't bear it when my horse starts to look scruffy and dirty! For some fab tips on how to spruce your horse up without the need to bath him, see p117."



Follow Lucy on Twitter
@horseandrideruk

“Feel has a lot to do with timing your aids to easily and sympathetically influence your horse's way of going”



Explains David Sheerin in '7 exercises to improve your feel', on p24.

Discover our team's wealth of horsey experience at horseandrideruk.com

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January 2015 Contents

24



Regulars

- 6 Horseworld** News, diary dates and the joys of early mornings
- 14 Wild and free** A look at four semi-feral breeds living as nature intended
- 21 Share, write, tweet** Have your say here
- 82 What's on the Web?** @horseandrideruk.com
- 108 Subscribe to *H&R*** and get a Bentley gift set
- 152 Competition entries** One form for all prizes
- 153 Next month** What's inside February *H&R*?
- 154 My life with horses** The exciting but busy world of an equestrian sports commentator

In the saddle

- 24 Tune in!** Seven ways to improve your feel while in the saddle
- 32 Jump start** Make your first show a success with Yazmin Pinchen
- 38 Make the most of winter hacks** How to stay safe and enjoy hacking to the full
- 42 Lateral thinking** Master travers and you're halfway to half-pass

Mind matters

- 48 Parting ways** How to prepare yourself for selling your horse
- 54 Fix your fears** The best ways to regain your confidence
- 62 Your riding life** Coping with making difficult decisions about your horse's future

Ask the Experts

- 66 Horse management**
 - Different dropping sizes
 - Eating branches • The development of dapples
- 68 Equine behaviour**
 - Headaches in horses
 - Cows as companions
 - Tail postures
- 70 Veterinary matters**
 - Sickie hocks • Equine nosebleeds • Bringing him back into work
- 72 Shopping** • Numnah thickness • Gaiters vs chaps • Suitable high-vis
- 74 Riding technique**
 - Keeping reins even • An odd jumping technique
 - Dropping the contact
- 76 Quick Q&As** • Bedding • Girths • Manure • Remote coach

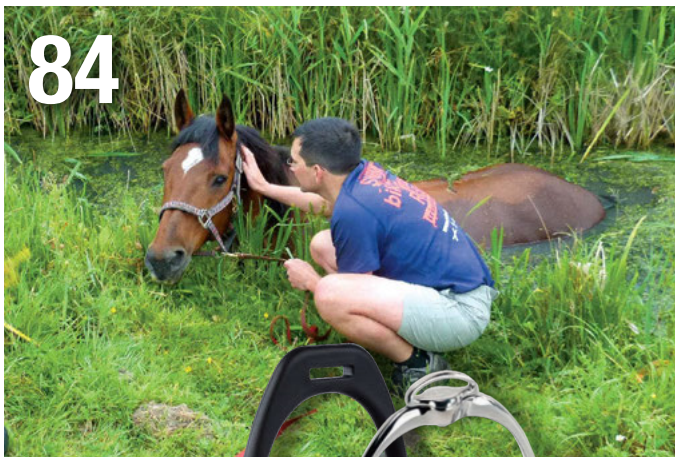
Competitions

- 64 WIN!** Training with Jason Webb, plus Champion gear
- 141 Perfect prizes!** £1,051-worth of horsey prizes



152
Enter our
competitions
on one
form

84



123



130

COVER STORIES

A real passion for horses

UK'S BEST-SELLING EQUESTRIAN MONTHLY

Horse & Rider

Make the most of WINTER HACKS

54 → **FIX YOUR FEARS**
METHODS THAT WORK!

88 → **MANAGE MUD FEVER**

24 → **TUNE IN!**
7 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR FEEL

123 → **STIRRUPS**
AMAZING NEW HIGH-TECH DESIGNS

78 → **SARCOIDS** – the latest thinking and treatments

84 → **REAL LIFE** – my horse disappeared into a ditch

117 → **HOW TO** dry-clean your horse this winter

64 → **WIN** training with Jason Webb, plus Champion gear

← 38

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Ask a vet

- 78 Growth factors**
The latest thinking on treatments for sarcoids
- 84 Last-ditch attempt**
When a reader's horse disappeared into a ditch
- 88 Manage mud fever**
The best way to prevent and treat it

Management know-how

- 94 Golden oldies** What you need to consider when feeding a veteran
- 101 Tips for winter travellers** How to stay safe while transporting your horse
- 106 Wellbeing news**
- Recurrent colic
 - Laminitis study
 - Melanoma treatment

Horse shopping

- 112 DIY Christmas gifts**
Make something special for your horse friends
- 123 Stirrups** Amazing new high-tech designs
- 130 Back to basics**
Exploring Iceland on horseback
- 136 Top 10 tackroom essentials** Items to make your life that little bit easier
- 138 What's in store?** Our pick of the new products hitting the shelves
- 140 This month we love...**
Equestrian art, stylish bracelets, personalised whips and more

Directory

- 142 Horses for sale** Find the horse of your dreams here and in our huge selection at horseandrideruk.com
- 144 Houses for sale** Want to keep your horse at home? Here's the perfect place!
- 145 Horse&Rider directory**
Find what you want, from insurance to riding holidays, in our classified ads



117

Equine dry-cleaning
Get your horse's winter coat sparkling without giving him a bath

Horse world

Photo: Amy Dragoo



Daybreak

(E)arly starts are a reality for many horse people. There's something so peaceful about a dawn ride on the gallops. Horse and rider connect as one in these clandestine hours, before the rest of the world awakens.



Monty Roberts tours India

Renowned American horse trainer Monty Roberts recently visited India to see the work of equine charity The Brooke. The week-long tour included field visits to The Brooke's community-based Equine Welfare Units in Sonipat, Muzzaffarnagar and Baghpat, which help communities learn equine welfare skills and provide solutions to welfare problems. Monty met trained local farriers, harness makers, vets, feed sellers and equine owners.

Monty says: "I have been looking forward to seeing The Brooke's work for myself since first hearing about this wonderful charity years ago. I hope to improve the lives of horses and humans alike, and The Brooke's fundamental aim is the same. This is my first time in India and I am excited to meet with local communities, see how The Brooke staff engage with them and provide useful tips along the way to help improve the lives of these hardworking animals."



Charles family find success at HOYS

Harry and Sienna Charles are following in the footsteps of their father, Peter, a showjumping team gold medallist at the London 2012 Olympics. The siblings took top honours at the Horse of the Year Show, with Sienna crowned 128cm Pony Champion and Harry Pony Showjumper of the Year.

Twelve-year-old Sienna was riding 22-year-old chestnut mare Murka's Flinor Songbird, a seasoned veteran in pony showjumping competitions. The family has a tradition of winning the 128cm championship – Sienna won the title last year, her sister, Scarlett, won it in 2012 and her brother, Harry, won in 2011.

Harry, riding Scoubidou IV, posted a blazing fast clear round to secure the Pony Showjumper of the Year title. He says: "I didn't know the pony could go that fast, but Dad encouraged me that he could do it and we managed to go quick enough."



Photos: E S Photography



Horse *world*

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

A coloured cob turned himself in to Police Headquarters in Cheshire after breaking free from his field. A Cheshire Constabulary spokesperson said: "We like to ensure a warm welcome to all our guests at HQ and at neigh point did the horse pose a risk to security!"

Watch the video: bit.ly/horsepolice

A horse owner found himself in court after his horse's rampage in Wallsend, Tyne and Wear. The horse was spotted walking unaccompanied in a residential area and later bolted along a railway line and road, but was caught.



Holland takes Nations Cup Final

Fresh off their winning streak at the World Equestrian Games, the Dutch showjumpers proved a force to be reckoned with at the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Final in Barcelona, from 9–12 October. The team consisted of Gerco Schroder on Glock's London, reigning World Champion Jeroen Dubbeldam on Zenith SFN, Maikel van der Vleuten on VDL Groep Verdi and Jur Vrieling on VDL Groep Bubalu.

The competition was held at night under floodlights, giving the event a very special feel. What's more, a scintillating laser light show and American musician Aloe Blacc entertained the crowd following the prize-giving ceremony. This marks the second year of the new Furusiyya format, which is already proving to be a riveting and prestigious competition in international showjumping.

RDA pony wins BETA competition



Bobbysocks, a 26-year-old pony from Leicestershire has been named as the most inspirational equine of the year by the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA). In his younger days, Bobbysocks was a "jumping machine", according to Dawn Whitmore-Kirby, his owner. Now, he's a dutiful RDA pony who helps disabled children

experience the joy of riding. He's still lively with an able-bodied rider on him, but Dawn says: "Put a disabled kid on him and he slows down, plods around and just seems to know that he needs to take care of them."

London Mayor, Boris Johnson, challenged reporters to try to take a horse on a bus. He says: "I don't see why horses shouldn't be allowed on buses. Horses used to pull buses after all. You should see what happens if you try and take your horse on a bus."

Unfortunately, bus drivers don't seem so welcoming. **Watch the video, bit.ly/horsebus**

Puissance winner will jump again

The London International Horse Show at Olympia is a tradition for many British horse lovers and the Puissance class is a Christmas-time favourite. Riders and their horses jump the massive red 'brick' wall as it becomes taller and taller, until a final winner is decided, winning a £20,000 prize. Last year's victor was Luca Maria Moneta, an Italian showjumper, on his mare, Quova de Vains.

Luca is a natural horseman who really believes in his horses. He forms a partnership with each one and takes their individual personality into account in his training. In last year's competition, he almost bowed out of the final round against Guy Williams and Richi Rich II, when the wall reached an incredible 2.18m (7ft 2in). It was the crowd, however, that swayed him to give it a go. He says: "It was a special energy because the crowd at Olympia is magical. You feel like you're riding with the crowd and they really support you."

The cornerstone of Luca's training programme is building trust and a solid relationship with his horses. He didn't expect Quova de Vains to jump the wall as well as she did. He says: "I came up to the wall in a balanced canter and I trusted her, believed in her and willed her to jump it, but understood if she thought it was too big. But as we approached the jump, I felt like she wanted to do it and she cleared it!"



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Rate H&R and you could win a **Mountain Horse Crew jacket**, worth £89.95! Visit tinyurl.com/RateJan15 to give our features a star rating, and one lucky reader will take home this versatile, lightweight and waterproof fleece-lined jacket, ideal for all-year-round wear. Combining practical features with style, it's designed for in the saddle and on the yard. **mountainhorse.co.uk**



This month, arena eventing, stable management, flatwork with poles and showing

Diary dates

1

January

Jump into the New Year

Celebrate the start of 2015 with some British Showjumping at The Hand Equestrian Centre in Clevedon, Somerset. This competition is popular with showjumpers and has a real party atmosphere. For more information, visit handequestrian.com



2

January

Stable skills

Brush up on your stable management skills at Northallerton Equestrian Centre, Yafforth, North Yorkshire, in a **stable management for adults evening**. Gain confidence and get advice to give top care to your horse, whether you're on DIY or full livery. For more information, visit northallertonequestriancentre.co.uk



3

January

Gain confidence jumping

Milton Equestrian Centre in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, is holding a **Nervous and Novice showjumping competition**. Classes start at 30cm and go up to 55cm with rosettes to sixth place and cash prizes for the top three. For more information, visit miltonec.co.uk

11

January

Eventer's challenge

Summerhouse Equestrian will be hosting an **Eventer's Challenge** competition on its all-weather arena. The first section is over showjumps and the second is against the clock over natural obstacles. The time taken over the natural obstacles will be converted into penalty points and added to any jumping penalties from the showjumping section of the course. Lowest score wins. For more information, visit summerhouseec.co.uk

12

January

Secrets of success

Enjoyed learning from **Peter Storr** at The Dressage Convention? Here's your chance to ride with the renowned coach at Foxes Riding School in Wirral, Cheshire. Get out of the cold and into the indoor arena for a 45-minute private lesson on your horse for £85. Pre-booking is essential. For more information, visit foxesridingschool.co.uk

Horse world

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

A Scottish horse may become the world's tallest horse when he's finished growing. The five-year-old Shire measures 20.2hh (6ft 10in) and was rescued by a farmer. He enjoys 26lb of carrots, 24 apples, 11lb of spinach, four cabbages and the odd snack from farm staff in addition to his usual daily feed.

A human nutrition company is urging people to swap their bags of crisps for a healthier treat – a bag of dried horse meat. A Bag of Horse has 114 calories and apparently has a sweeter and more moist flavour than beef jerky.

H&R AND Out About

Follow the H&R team on Twitter and Facebook as they go about their adventures!

17

January

Pole position

Gain confidence over poles with a **flatwork with poles clinic**, taught by Caroline Peatfield BHSI at Riseholme College, Riseholme, Lincolnshire. The clinic is organised by BHS North Lincolnshire and costs £20 per rider. For more information, email caroline@dairyfarmequestrian.co.uk

25

January

Showing spectacular

Show your horse in-hand or ridden at **Patrington Mill's winter showing series** in Willerby, East Yorkshire. With 14 in-hand classes and 16 ridden classes, there's something for everyone. Quality rosettes and sashes to all first-place winners make this show one not to be missed. For more information, visit patringtonmillshowyard.co.uk

31

January

Strut your stuff

The Cotswold RDA is organising an **unaffiliated dressage competition** at the Jackie Bruton Riding School, located at Cheltenham Racecourse. Ride Intro, Prelim, Novice, Elementary or Medium tests and try out dressage to music with a class for freestyles at any level. For more information, visit cotswoldrda.org.uk



An equine embryo has been bought for €10,000 (approximately £7,900). The embryo is by the stallion Darco out of the dam line of the Olympic showjumping stallion Glock's London.

A recent survey of 3,000 Britons revealed that 97% think that horse riders should pick up horse manure from the road. The mess is viewed by non-horse people as "dangerous" and "unhygienic".

Spanish scientists have developed an equine skin equivalent in the laboratory. The research group say that it resembles skin "morphologically, immunohistochemically and ultrastructurally". Equine skin conditions are prevalent, but poorly understood and this type of technology may help scientists to understand and develop treatments for conditions.



Tweet box

Find out what our favourite horsey people are saying on Twitter this month

@EdwardWaites

(Sculptor, Edward Waites)

Shoot today for an article. #horseracing



@SRSLiveTour

(Spanish Riding School) Lovely picture taken in 1969 of British rider John Lassetter during his year-long stay at the SRS



@BenHobday

(British event rider, Ben Hobday) You can never do big things if you are distracted by small things. #StayFocused #TrueStory

@michaelashton

(Event rider and personal stylist, Michael Ashton) What an incredible weekend/feeling to complete our first 3DE – Rocket Man was such a pro, couldn't be more proud to own such a wonderful horse!



ARIAT Inspiration of the month

Sharon Woolaston has helped Gill Davies restore her confidence in the saddle

I am 62 years old and have had ponies since the age of 13, but after a nasty fall I lost my confidence and started to dread each ride, instead of enjoying it.

My husband bought me a 16-year-old Fell mare who hadn't been ridden in more than 10 years. I asked Sharon Woolaston who owns a dressage training and livery stables in the next village if she would help me retrain my mare. Although her yard is primarily a dressage performance yard, she took my Fell and turned her into a super hack. She helped me regain

my confidence with total support and encouragement. She does this for all her liversies, no matter who they are or what they want to do.

I now absolutely love riding again and no words or amount of money could repay her for transforming my life with horses. Sharon is a total inspiration.

Sharon Woolaston



Tell us why your horsey inspiration deserves this award, and they could win Ariat Olympia Breeches and Team Softshell Jacket in navy, and the Team Polo in navy or white, worth £255! Send a clear photo, SAE for its return, and contact details for you and your inspiration, to: Ariat Inspiration of the Month, *Horse&Rider*, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG, or email celeste@djmurphy.co.uk For full terms and conditions, visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk



ARIAT

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What's on TV for horse lovers

Check out **Horse & Country TV**, Sky channel 253 this February. Brand new episodes of **Backstage Pass with Monty Roberts** and **Parelli: Amazing Grace** are sure to cure winter training woes. What's more, catch up with the entertaining antics at Schramm Equestrian with event riders Dom and Jimmie Schramm in **Along for the Ride**. Get wild with a new series, **Zoo Vet at Large**, and don't miss new episodes of **Ruddall's Round-Up** and **Around the Dog World**. Watch all this and more on the go with **H&C TV Everywhere**. Find out more at everywhere.horseandcountry.tv and for full listings, visit horseandcountry.tv





A word cloud featuring various skin conditions. The words are arranged in a diagonal, overlapping fashion. The words include: 'muddy' (large, dark grey), 'Scabby' (medium, light grey), 'raw' (small, black), 'sore' (medium, red), 'sensitive' (medium, black), 'irritated' (medium, light grey), and 'skin' (medium, light grey). A small red heart icon is positioned above the word 'muddy'.

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Wild and free

Free-ranging horses on open landscapes are a symbol of freedom. Horse&Rider explores four semi-feral horse breeds



A full-page photograph of three horses grazing in a field at sunset. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, yellow, and red. In the background, a large, rounded hill is covered in dense, golden-brown vegetation. The foreground is a field of tall, dry grass with some purple wildflowers. Three horses are visible: a dark brown horse on the left, a lighter brown horse in the center, and a dark brown horse on the right. A small, dark tree stands on the right side of the hill.

The iconic image of horses running free over wild landscapes is an idyllic symbol of freedom for many. In reality, there's only one remaining population of truly wild horses – the Takhi, also known as Przewalski's horse. Other populations, including Welsh Mountain ponies, Konik horses and Mustangs are semi-feral. This means that they're self-sustaining and receive little human contact, but are descendants of a domesticated population.

Welsh Mountain ponies thrive on summer foliage...



Welsh Mountain ponies

In a remote corner of the Welsh mountains, a mare and her foal graze quietly. Hikers are rarely seen up on these hills, far from the nearest village or pub. These free-ranging horses are the guardians of the mountain, contributing to a fragile ecosystem, but their numbers are rapidly declining. Breeding and grazing semi-feral Welsh Mountain ponies on Welsh commons is becoming a thing of the past and the pony in its traditional surroundings on the Welsh mountains is under threat.

The ponies have a history of survival. King Henry VIII ordered a cull of small horses and ponies as they were unsuitable as war horses, but this act was partly repealed by Queen Elizabeth I, saving many native pony breeds. Nowadays, Welsh Mountain ponies are challenged by more natural threats – snowstorms, high tides and a reduced number of breeding mares.

...but ponies must also be hardy to weather the cold Welsh winters



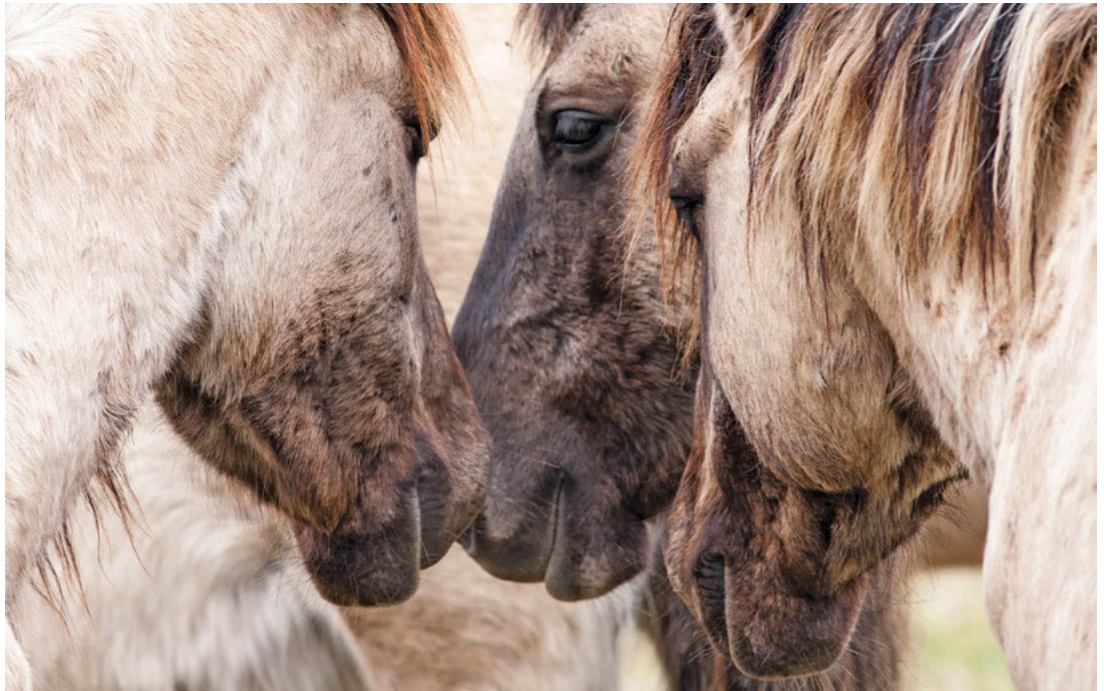
Konik horses

The Konik is a very hardy, semi-feral horse originating from Poland. It's believed to be a descendant of the now-extinct Tarpan, a wild European forest horse that roamed free until the end of the 19th Century. Koniks have similar characteristics to the Tarpan. They are mouse grey with dark manes and tails and zebra stripes on their legs. During winter, they grow thick white coats, just like the Tarpan.

Their similarities to the Tarpan made them a target for Nazi genetic experiments during World War II, which aimed to regenerate a German-bred

Tarpan species. When Germany invaded Poland, Polish Koniks were taken back to Germany for this purpose, but were likely eaten by starving civilians in Berlin and Munich when Russia later invaded Germany.

The Konik is now used on grazing and wetlands in the UK, such as Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire. They live in semi-feral herds and help restore land that has been altered or improved with fertilisers and herbicides. They do this by grazing down all the lush grass and allowing native species to reintegrate into the fields.



The striking Konik horse in Poland

Mustang horses

America's Mustang horses likely descended from Spanish or Iberian animals brought to America during the 16th Century. More than two million wild horses and burros (small donkeys) were reported to have roamed the western United States by 1800. They were highly prized by the Native Americans and used extensively for hunting and transportation.

Large Mustang herds didn't pose a problem in the vast lands of the American West, until the ranges started to be developed by ranchers for cattle grazing, causing a conflict in available space and grass and leading to Mustang culls. American horse lovers were outraged, causing the American government to intervene, and today semi-feral Mustangs can be adopted through state-run programmes.



Large numbers of Mustangs roam the American West





Australian Brumbies

The Brumby is found in many regions of Australia, notably in the Australian Alps and the Northern Territory. Like the Mustang, the Brumby is a descendant of escaped or lost horses belonging to settlers. They're viewed as pests by the Australian government as they may have a negative environmental impact in many cases, including trampling of vegetation, soil loss and compaction. What's more, their significant numbers have resulted in government-ordered culls, sometimes performed by marksmen in helicopters. The practice has sparked lively debate in Australia, with horse lovers regarding the animals as a symbol of freedom and the Outback, while conservationists see them as a destructive force on Australia's ecosystem.

★★★ Rate this feature

Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).



Developing horse rugs since 1969

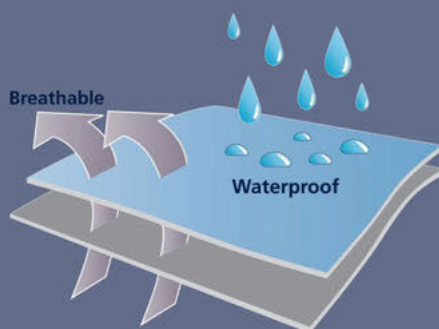
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If you want to comment on an article in Horse&Rider or share your thoughts, then drop a line to Lucy Turner – address on p22. Remember to include your contact details and jacket size!

STAR
LETTER!

Happy hacker and proud!

I'm a happy hacker. There, I've said it! Why do so many of us say it in a self-deprecating manner, often prefixing it with 'just' as though we are somehow inferior riders? I have encountered many people who think that because they compete, they are better riders. Has this attitude rubbed off on us?

Not for me is the early morning primping and preening of my horse, then hanging around at shows waiting for my few minutes of glory or disaster. Nor is going home at the end of a long day happy with a host of rosettes or disappointed with none. I have a drawer full of rosettes won at, admittedly low-key, riding club events, but having other interests and constraints upon my time, I have neither the time nor inclination to do more. My pleasure comes from rising early, tacking up my mare and heading off along the quiet lanes, tracks and bridleways that I am fortunate to live near.

I have resolved many issues while out hacking, but mostly I like to empty my mind of cares and simply enjoy the peace and quiet. I absorb the sounds, sights and smells of farm animals and wildlife, and come home calm and refreshed, ready for whatever the day brings. Does this make me less of a rider?

I may never jump 5ft or perform a pirouette (at least not intentionally!), but on a hack I have obstacles to overcome, such as rivers and fords, rough terrain, gates and steps. I may also encounter 'monsters' in the form of tractors, scramble bikes, hot-air balloons, pheasants, loose sheep or young cattle excitedly running along the hedge line.

All these require a variety of skills, if hacking is to be enjoyed safely and effectively. Please don't dismiss happy hackers as inferior riders. As a hacker, it's helpful to be able to leg-yield, perform a turn-on-the-forehand and jump safely. It's important to have an obedient, responsive, supple horse and for the rider to have a secure seat (particularly for those flighty pheasant moments!), and for both horse and rider to be balanced and in harmony with one another. Isn't that what we are all aiming for, whatever discipline we enjoy?

Judith Sullivan, Shropshire

f Have your say!

We asked you on our Facebook page whether you think spurs are a valuable training aid or just an excuse for bad riding. Here's what you had to say...

Holly Grindey If a bit is only as harsh as the hands that hold it, then spurs are only as harsh as the legs they are connected to. They are a valuable training tool when used correctly by an experienced rider.

Jennie Atkinson I get fed up with seeing kids kick the hell out of their ponies while wearing spurs at shows. They should not be allowed!

Chloe Durrant I used the roller ball spurs on my lad because he was ignoring my leg.

Once he sharpened up, I stopped using them. Like all training aids, they're best used with expert advice and never long term.

Horse Feathers Saddlery I personally see spurs as decorative devices for competitions. Then again, I also see nosebands as 'band aids' for training issues.

Sheila Kite I have seen international dressage riders using spurs so harshly at every stride, yet judges and stewards do not penalise them for it. If this is the case, then perhaps it is time to get rid of them and we will see the riders' real abilities, or not, as the case may be!

To have your say about horsey issues of the day, visit facebook.com/HorseandRiderMag



More events in Wales, please!

Eventing is very popular in England, boasting many events from BE80, all the way up to CCI**** events such as Badminton Horse Trials. But there is only one major event based in Wales on the British Eventing calendar. I really think this should change, as many people in Wales are passionate about eventing, but they have to travel miles just to go to an event. Eventing would be even more popular in Wales if there were more events in this part of the United Kingdom.

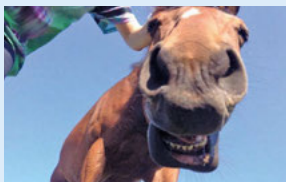
Sasha P, via email



H&R's TOP TWEETS

Our favourite tweets
@HorseandRiderUK

@Sophie_Colley1 Sep 17
My gorgeous
Thoroughbred Bella

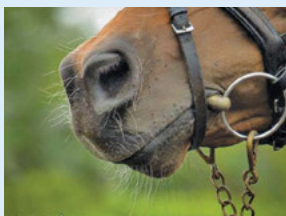


@saddler_adam



*My best friend is
the one who brings
out the best in me...*

@Foreman4Sally
The equine muzzle – a
nice place :)



Conquering hardships

The October issue was an emotional read for me, but I was nevertheless pleased to see the two articles on Cushing's disease and euthanasia, which caused me to sob a little.

Four years ago, my pony, Tarren, was put to sleep after a peaceful retirement due to her ongoing struggle with Cushing's. She was the pony I learnt to ride on as a little girl, moving to live with us when the riding school closed down. Being used to an active lifestyle meant the box rest and lameness associated with her disease caused her a lot of frustration at times.

Following her diagnosis, I taught myself a few basic equine massage and physical therapy exercises from books to help ease her stiffness. Also, to keep her active I did pole exercises in walk and took her out for 'hacks' in-hand. We did everything we could to give her the best quality of life while she was with us and she was happy for many years.

I have realised that the best way to honour Tarren's memory is to keep practising and building upon everything she taught me



PET OF THE MONTH



My puppy, Shadow, might be tiny, but she often teases the bigger dogs and puts them in their place!

Owned by Lorna Moaby, Hampshire

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The eventual choice to put her to sleep was a very difficult one and it took me a long time to come to terms with it, although I knew it was in her best interests. I took a two-year break from riding, finding it difficult to consider riding another horse. However, last year I started lessons again and it is the best thing that could have happened.

Now I'm finding more horses to love and care for, and have realised that the best way to honour Tarren's memory is to keep practising and building upon everything she taught me throughout her life. Her disease caused us all pain and difficulty at times, but managing it also helped me grow immensely as a horsewoman.

I'd like to thank you for covering these topics, difficult though they are, as preparation and knowledge are key to helping both horse and owner tackle these hardships as best they can.

Nicola Todhunter, via email



Horse&Rider thank you...

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BORN EQUESTRIAN

7 exercises to improve your feel

Some riders have a natural ability to 'feel' what the horse is doing underneath them – others have to spend a bit more time working at it. And that's fine, explains Wellington Riding's Chief Instructor, David Sheerin. There are many ways to your own horsey 'aha' moment...

Our equine models



Seven-year-old **Finbar** is a real charmer and an often-requested ride in the school.



At 22 years old, **Fella** is a distinguished gentleman whose character and enthusiasm

have taught hundreds of people to enjoy riding.

During my career as a riding instructor, I've met thousands of riders of all ages and witnessed many 'first-time' riding experiences. I honestly believe some people have a natural ability to feel what the horse is doing underneath them, from the moment they first put their foot in the stirrup. Others have to spend a bit more time developing their feel. And that's fine. Riding is not a paint-by-numbers pursuit and there are many ways to get to your own horsey 'aha' moment.

But what is feel? It's the Holy Grail of riding and the foundation for the empathetic, sympathetic connection with our horses that we are all aiming for. Some people say you can't teach feel and to an extent that's true. You only have to look around the dance floor at a wedding to see that some people can dance and some... well, some just bump along looking a bit uncomfortable.

The good news is that riding with feeling is underpinned with the rider's understanding of what the horse is doing underneath them. This mechanical awareness can be developed, regardless of what natural talent you start with.

Feel has a lot to do with timing your aids to easily and sympathetically influence the horse's way of going. The point of these exercises is not to get really good at counting or to pick up the right diagonal in trot, but to transition this mechanical understanding into instinct, so you can stop thinking with your brain and start riding with your body. Only then will you have developed greater feel.

While I may not be able to improve how you dance at the next family wedding, I have developed some exercises to help you tune into your sense of feel.

► Improve the timing of your aids ► Tune in to your horse's movement



Our instructor



David Sheerin began his career at Wellington

Riding as a working pupil in 1995. After gaining his British Horse Society qualifications, David worked in racing and eventing yards, returning to Wellington as Chief Instructor in 2007. David is training for his BHS Fellowship and is still keenly involved in eventing, organising British Eventing's Wellington Horse Trials and securing his place on the British Riding Club CIC** team for 2015.

Our riders



Catie Greener came to Wellington to train for her

British Horse Society examinations. She hopes to take her skills on the road and teach riding around the world.



Laura Entwistle recently qualified as a Riding for

the Disabled Group Instructor and holds a BSc (Hons) in Equine Science. She is working towards a Masters in Professional Practice in Veterinary Physiotherapy.

Riding isn't paint-by-numbers

The difference between riding with feel and just doing what you are told is like the difference between an original Monet and a rigid paint-by-numbers project: one is art and one is hard work.

Tune in to what you are feeling with your body and what is happening underneath you, and slightly tune out your mental analysis. You may find that your reactions are quicker, softer and more empathetic if you ride by your gut feeling. These exercises are designed to help you tune in to what you are feeling...



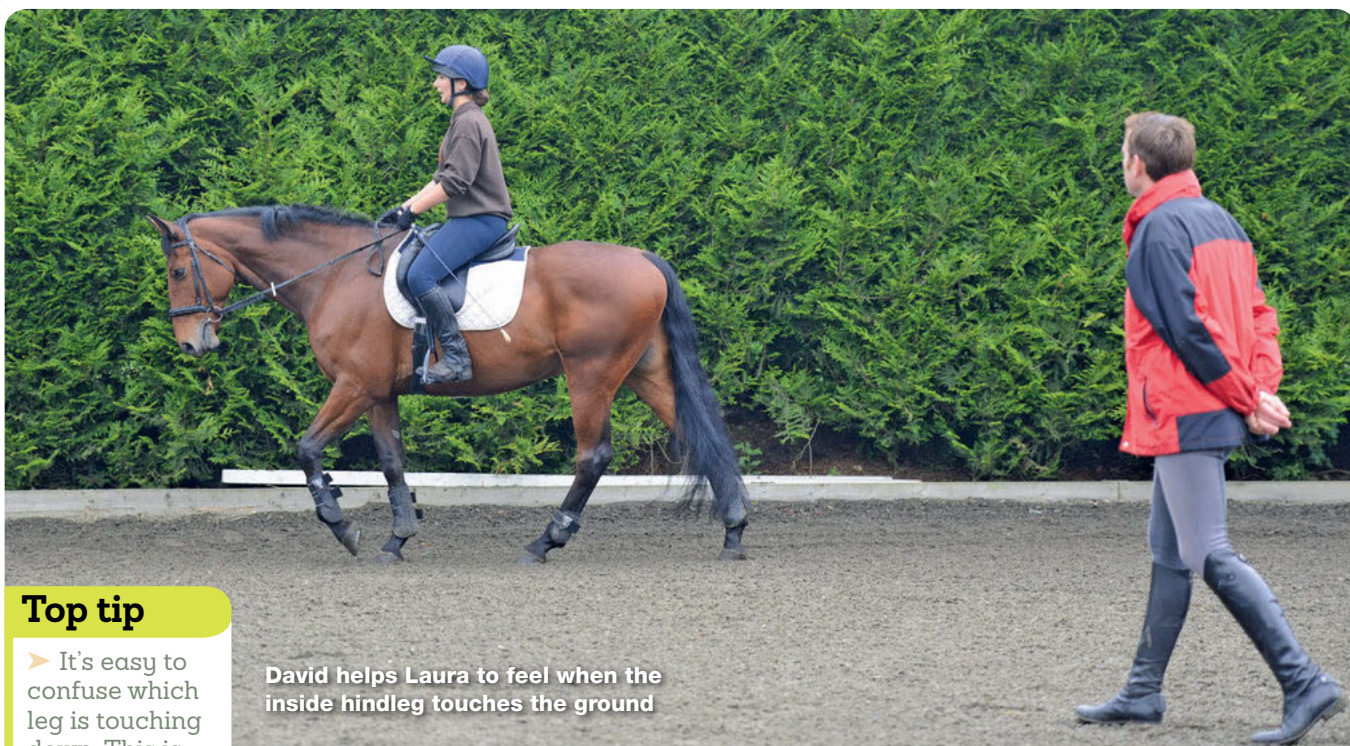
Develop your metronome

Riders with natural feel appear to have a built-in metronome – you never see Charlotte Dujardin or Carl Hester in a half-baked trot, do you? But for the rest of us, there are exercises to help you install your own metronome. And it starts by understanding the mechanics of how your horse moves.

The first three exercises are rider head-scratchers – low-impact for the horse and ideal to do while you are warming up.

Understanding the mechanics of how your horse moves is a bit of an intellectual process. But you've got to progress from thinking with your brain to riding with your body

Exercise 1 Count as the inside hindleg touches the ground in walk



Top tip

➤ It's easy to confuse which leg is touching down. This is when a friend or other rider can help keep you on the right track. Once you have memorised the timing of your horse's footfalls, you'll be able to start co-ordinating your aids.

David helps Laura to feel when the inside hindleg touches the ground

How to ride it

Starting in walk, mark the moment the inside hindleg touches the ground with your voice. Saying something simple like 'Now' will tune you in to the feeling of the horse stepping under.

Why it works

If you can fix the feeling of the hindleg lifting, moving under and stepping on the ground into your bodily memory, you'll be able to strategically time the application of your leg aid. Think about it: no matter how willing and responsive your horse is, if you apply your leg

aid while his inside hind hoof is static on the ground, he can't physically respond until he takes the next step.

The result

Riding with greater feeling means you time your aid to the moment your horse lifts his inside hind, when he is physically able to respond instantly. Whether you are one of the lucky riders who does this naturally or because you have spent time carefully working through the nuts and bolts of the mechanics, the result is the same: greater harmony between horse and rider.

Exercise 2 With all four legs moving, can you tell which is doing what?



Catie checks with David that she has the timing right

How to ride it

The walk should have a clear, four-beat rhythm. One foot is raised while the other hooves are in contact with the ground, except for a split second when the next hoof is lifting and the previous foot is lowering. The order of the footfalls are: right hind, right fore, left hind, left fore. Try calling out '1, 2, 3, 4' as each foot is placed on the ground.

Why it works

You are naturally more aware of your horse's front legs – after all, you're sitting a lot closer to them! It's quite common to mistake the 'roll' of the horse's shoulders for the movement of the hindlegs. Calling out each footfall in walk will establish a vocal marker for

the feeling of the horse moving underneath you. Many riders are surprised just how quickly the legs pick up and put down.

The result

Being able to identify each independent leg moving might take co-ordination and concentration, but in isolation it's not terribly helpful for developing your feel. However, once you have established the connection between the mechanics of the movement and what each footfall feels like in your brain, you'll be able to stop thinking about it and ride with a greater understanding with your body. Vocalising each footfall will also call attention to the rhythm of the walk.



By tuning in to the rhythm of Finbar's footfalls, Laura warms up with an excellent walk

Exercise 3 Picking up the correct diagonal

How to ride it

Start this exercise by making a transition from walk to rising trot. Stay on the diagonal you pick up and spend a little time feeling for clues as to which diagonal you are on. When you are sure, ask someone you are riding with or someone on the ground to confirm whether you picked it up correctly.

Progress the exercise

When you are able to consistently tell which diagonal you are on after the transition into trot (without looking down, more on that over the page), move in and out of sitting trot, concentrating on feeling your way into picking up the correct diagonal.

Top tip

➤ The footfalls happen much quicker than you think and often riders get the timing wrong – one leg slower or one leg 'off' what the rhythm actually is. This is when having a friend on the ground is really helpful to nudge the timing back on track.



“ It's important to learn what the right or wrong diagonal feels like. Above, Laura rises on the wrong diagonal, but logged the feeling. Below, she's changed her diagonal by feel – rather than by looking. ”





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Exercise 4 Reacting to the situation

How to ride it

Now you're both warmed up, incorporate a bit of feeling into your schooling by putting a little pressure on yourself to react to the diagonal you pick up. In sitting trot, proceed up the centre line. When you cross X, pick up rising trot and turn left or right at the end of the arena, depending on which diagonal you have risen on.

Why it works

Being on the correct diagonal allows the horse to balance and for the rider to time their leg aid. Rising with the outside shoulder means you are up off the horse's back when he is lifting the all-important inside hindleg – giving him freedom to push through or move laterally.

The result

Being able to tune in to the mechanics of the trot and pick up whatever diagonal you choose helps to make every stride count, important when preparing for a turn, change of pace within a pace, transition or movement.

On the correct diagonal, you will be able to time your leg aid with the upswing of your rise and the upswing of your horse's inside hindleg as it comes off the ground.

Make a decision based on the diagonal you pick up and turn right or left from the centre line

Top tip

➤ Dressage judges are always looking for subtle clues that the horse and rider are working in harmony. While there isn't a collective mark for feel, the ability to ride with feeling will present a much nicer test. Picking up the correct diagonal is a subtle marker that the rider is tuned in to every footfall – and the judge will spot it.



Exercise 5 Help your horse to respond quickly



How to ride it

Set up for leg-yield as you would normally. Once your horse is straight, apply your leg aid as you begin your rise. The sequence goes something like this:

- Begin your rise on the correct diagonal.
- During the ascending phase of your rise, apply your leg aid asking for leg-yield.
- Relax your leg aid as you return to the saddle.
- Repeat until you have returned to the track.



Why it works

During the upswing of the rise in rising trot, your horse's inside hindleg is coming off the ground. Applying your leg aid at this moment means he is best able to respond immediately.

The result

Getting the timing of your leg aid right will make you a more effective and economical rider. Once you have anchored the feeling of the horse moving across in time with your aid, lateral work will become much easier for both of you.

Top tip

➤ This exercise is especially good if you have mirrors in the school to watch the impact of your well-timed leg aid.

Exercise 6 Transition in a corner



Top tip

Concentrating on perfecting the timing of the aids is a nice way to put yourself under a bit of mental pressure and improve your ability to focus and concentrate.

How to ride it

Carrying on from successfully timed leg aids for leg-yield, incorporate a transition to canter in the next corner. As you finish your leg-yield and begin to turn the corner, ask for the transition to canter directly from rising trot. Don't sit for a few strides – instead, stay in the rhythm of the trot and ask for the canter transition as you sit in the saddle. This challenges you to co-ordinate the same aids used for leg-yield into the timing and preparation for the transition.

Why it works

Because your horse's outside hindleg propels the first step of canter, this exercise gives him the best opportunity to respond immediately to your aids. It should feel like he has stepped under and flowed into the new pace.

Your horse can only respond immediately if you ask him at the right moment, otherwise he is physically and mechanically forced to delay.

Quality transitions come from the hindlegs, and preparing and timing the moment you ask for a transition gives the horse the best chance to respond.

The result

Riders with natural feel instinctively prepare for the transition by engaging the horse's hindlegs – this exercise gives you the same instinct. It will also help to improve the horse's suppleness and bend, as well as the rider's timing.

From a viewer or judge's perspective, smooth transitions make the horse appear forward-thinking and on the aids.

Feel is about having empathy with your horse. You can't be taught feel, but you can learn to develop it yourself



Exercise 7 Canter strike-off over a pole



Finbar shows that he is not on the aids by picking up canter three strides after the pole and shows resistance when asked slightly out of time.



Finbar is now more on the aids and picks up canter over the pole – but on the wrong leg.



By angling her shoulders and hips in the direction she wants to go, Laura aligns her aids for a beautiful strike off over the pole and a much more pleasing picture.

How to ride it

Place a pole on the ground on the three-quarter line by E or B so you can approach it from either direction. Approach in trot and ask your horse to make a transition to canter over the pole. This tests how much you've learned from exercise six, because it's essential that you ask for the transition at the precise moment, so your horse can lift over the pole and into canter.

Why it works

This is a great exercise to develop your timing and feel because there is a lot going on in a short space of time. The correct canter strike-off is a clear indicator of when you've got it right.

By practicing transitions over a pole on the floor, you will have to sharpen the precision of your aids – over a pole there is even less flexibility about when to make the transition than in a dressage test when you have to make a transition at a marker.

The result

Once you have perfected this exercise, your horse will be straight and in front of your leg.

Common mistakes

On the first attempt it's common to pick up canter a stride or two after the pole and, more often than not, on the wrong canter lead.

On the second attempt, most riders make a correction, ask for canter too early and the transition happens a stride or two before the pole, still often on the wrong canter lead.

Sometimes the horse anticipates the canter strike-off when they turn the corner and see the pole – help settle your horse by shortening your approach to the pole.

These exercises are designed to improve your awareness and understanding of the mechanics of the horse, so that you can ride more effectively and sympathetically. With enough practice and structured learning, you can make the transition from only being able to think about the movement of the horse and the timing of your aids to being able to ride with feel.

Remember when you were learning to drive a car? Using the gears, clutch and brake, and approaching a roundabout took every ounce of your concentration. When the mechanics of driving become second nature, your instincts are able to drive the car and you learn to enjoy the song on the radio. Given time and plenty of practice, these exercises will bring the same instinct to your riding. Enjoy!

★★★ Rate this feature

Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Our trainer



Yazmin Pinchen is a young British showjumper who has represented her country on numerous occasions, including a senior Nations Cup class in Abu Dhabi. Yazmin has produced all her top-level showjumpers herself, from youngsters all the way up to placing at some of the most prestigious competitions in the world.

Jump start



► Warm-up strategies for young horses ► Management advice

Now that you've mastered jumping courses with your youngster at home, it's time to go out to a show. Yazmin Pinchen explains how to make your first time a success

Going to your first show with a youngster is exciting and can be particularly satisfying if you come home with a rosette! Winning, however, is not the object of the game for producing your youngster – especially not at the beginning. If you've followed my advice and mastered the basics with your young horse, you should be ready to get out and about. Here are some points to consider...

Choosing your shows

At the beginning of the year, I sit down and plan all my competition dates. You may not know what you're doing so far in advance, but it's good to plan a few months ahead. This enables you to make sure your horse is fit enough to compete and allows you to have goals. It's important to school young horses with aims in mind, and by having a log of where you've been and where you're going, you're able to assess your horse's progress as he moves up the grades.

It's a good idea to go to local, unaffiliated shows to begin with. Travelling can be stressful for your horse, especially on his first few journeys. Keep it close to home and choose a show with smaller jumps. Trotting around a 60cm (2ft) course with your youngster will give you a lot of insight into his strengths and weaknesses. He may spook at some of the fillers or people at the side of the arena, but if you ride firmly you should be able to get him around the course. What's more, the cost of entry is likely to be reasonable enough that you could do a couple of rounds.

Before you write off affiliated competition as too daunting for you and your young horse, consider the benefits. Affiliated shows have a guaranteed standard of jumps and courses. There are rules in British Showjumping that dictate the complexity of courses. For instance, you won't find a treble combination or water tray at British Novice level (90cm or 2ft 11in), but in a 90cm unaffiliated class, it might be a very different story. Affiliated shows are required to have professional course builders and a good standard of jumps and surfaces, which will help your young horse have a positive experience.

At the same time, remember that weather can change any surface, so if it's been a rainy week, consider skipping a show on grass to reduce the risk of your horse slipping and having a bad experience. You're responsible for giving your youngster the best possible conditions for his competition education, so be picky.



British Showjumping's Club membership is £30 for one year, and classes are often run alongside Senior shows. There are classes from 70cm (2ft 3in) to 1m (3ft 3in) and the entry fees are capped at £10.

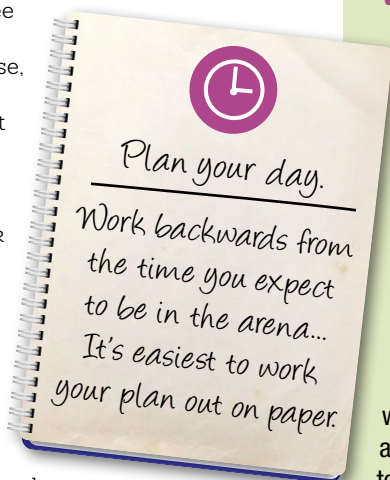
Of course, there are many unaffiliated shows that are run to a very high standard and many venues host both unaffiliated and affiliated competitions. The bottom line is that you should choose your shows carefully to make sure each outing will boost your youngster's confidence, rather than destroy it.



Planning your day

Once you have an idea of which shows you'll be taking your youngster to, it's time to plan your day. Work backwards from the time you expect to be in the arena. It's always difficult to know how the show is running, especially ones that you must enter on the day, so keep the show secretary's number handy and give them a quick ring on the day of the show to see how things are progressing. Of course, it helps if you're competing in the first class of the day as you'll know a firm start time!

It's easiest to work your plan out on paper. Allocate 30 minutes for your warm-up, then account for learning and walking the course, tacking up, unloading your horse from the lorry and picking up your number from the secretary. With youngsters, it might be a good idea to let them have a little pick of grass after they've come off the lorry, just to get them settled.



Leave yourself lots of time to load him

Don't forget to account for your travel time, traffic and time at home to load your horse onto the lorry. It's better to be early than be stressed out because you're late. Your horse can sense your stress levels and he won't know why you're panicking, making it even more worrying for him.

Calm your nerves

Your first show will always be the worst for nerves, but if you keep things low-key you will be fine. You must be able to ride your horse to a much higher standard at home than the class you are entering him in. This means that if you're confidently jumping 80cm courses at home, enter your horse into a 60 or 70cm class. This gives you a bit of a cushion if things go wrong.

Make sure you always have someone with you who is a positive influence on your riding and never go to a show alone. I always have my mum with me and she knows me so well – she always offers positive and constructive feedback, so I always go into the ring with a positive attitude. Someone who is continually criticising you or trying to make you change your riding at the show will not help you give your youngster a positive experience, and will only increase your nerves!

Warming up

I like to get on with plenty of time to spare and give my horse a walk, trot and canter. I walk him around the showground at first and let him take in the atmosphere. Once I'm in the warm-up arena, it's down to business and I ask him to focus on me. I want to create a horse who is soft, supple and listening to my aids.

I do lots of transitions, just like I would in my warm-up for jumping at home. I make sure he's listening to my leg and if he's not, I use a firmer leg aid or a reminder with my whip. Having your horse off your leg aids is very important – he must move forward when you ask or collect when you need to.

I incorporate some leg-yield and shoulder-in into my warm up. These exercises help to get the horse listening to the aids, focused on the task at hand and supple.

It's important to keep it quite easy in the warm-up for my youngsters at shows. Competitions are not a place to start teaching a horse something new – he must have the firm foundations of flatwork and jumping in place before you head out to a competition. It can make for a very stressful day if you are trying to put the pieces together



under the pressure of a competition environment! So keep it small and simple – jump smaller than you would at home and give him a good experience.

When it's time to jump, I start out with a cross-pole. I jump this a couple of times from trot or canter, then move on to a vertical. I jump this a couple of times until I feel my horse is listening and jumping it well, then move on to a small oxer. I don't put any pressure on my horses, I just keep it simple and never overface them. Falling out with your youngster is counterproductive.

I finish on a vertical, then I am ready to go into the arena.

Keep it small and simple – jump smaller than you would at home and give him a good experience



It's competition time

Entering the arena on a young horse can be daunting, but try to relax – you've done all you can in preparation. Get into the arena as soon as you're able and walk or trot around the fences, being careful not to interfere with any riders currently on course. There may be some jumps that your horse might find scary or intimidating, but keep your cool and let him have a look before you start your round. Don't over-ride because you think a fence is scary – your horse might not even bat an eyelid at it and if you over ride him, you may make him tense and worried. Just keep your leg on, stay focused and stick to your plan.

If things don't go to as expected, you'll have to rely on your skill as a rider to adapt your plan as you go. That takes practice. As you ride more and encounter more problems, you'll start to learn how to deal with a variety of issues, so kick on. Things will get easier with time and soon enough you'll have a young horse who is ready to move up the grades and is unfazed by all the fillers, water trays and related distances you might find on a showjumping course.

When you come out of the ring, give your horse a big pat and a Polo or handful of grass. Even if it didn't all go to plan in the arena, you want to end on a good note and keep your horse happy. There is always another show, so don't get discouraged if you don't achieve clear rounds and rosettes the first time.

If you're having a lot of difficulty or if your horse is continually refusing, it might be time to call in a professional. Don't be afraid to ask an instructor to help. Even the top riders confer with one another and you won't be the first one to have issues with your youngster! Lessons or clinics can help, too, and if they're away from home, you'll have the added advantage of taking your youngster out to see a new venue.



Don't be afraid to seek the help of an instructor



Get in the ring right away and show him the spooky jumps

Feed and management

It's good to get advice on your youngster's feed and management. I regularly confer with my vet and a nutritionist so I know my horses are always ready to perform at their best. Vet Chloe Bristow gives some great advice for young horses: "The important thing with young horses is that they must be allowed to develop as naturally as possible. It's really important to develop a lifelong athlete, and that starts with proper nutrition and a tailored exercise plan. It's important to provide the calories the horse needs to work without overdoing it, which can result in an overweight and uncontrollable animal."

"Complete feeds are great for youngsters as they have the correct balance of key minerals, such as calcium and phosphate. Amino acids are important as well, as your youngster will be building lots of muscles. Muscle growth results in part from microtrauma – little tears resulting from exercise that promote muscle growth. Antioxidants such as vitamin E and selenium can help to repair these microtraumas and protect cells, so should be provided within the diet. Even though their muscles are developing, young horses don't need a large amount of protein, as that can be quite difficult for the body to use and break down. The key is digestible sources of protein that are balanced for his ration."

"Youngsters benefit from slow-release energy gained from fibre and fat. That's ideal for training sessions because fast-release energy, such as starches, can make horses excitable and uncontrollable. Know your horse. If he's lagging during your sessions, you might need to add a bit of concentrate feed to help him. What's more, if he's sluggish at competitions, take a look at your feeding regime. If he ate his breakfast at 7am and is expected to compete at 1pm, he may not feel the full benefit of his feed. Above all, make sure he's getting the majority of his ration as forage, such as hay or haylage. The recommendation is 15g of dry matter per kg of equine bodyweight per day."

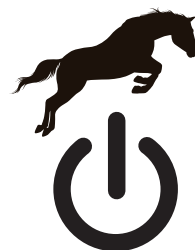
"While some people are divided on whether you should give your horse hay on the lorry, I don't think it makes sense to withhold hay, as long as it's good quality and not dusty. Fibre reduces the chance of gastric ulcers and can help a young horse settle on the lorry or trailer. What's more, fibre in the hindgut retains water and protects against dehydration."

Feed hay while travelling



Make sure he stays hydrated

"When you arrive at the competition, assess your horse's hydration status. Horses can lose up to 2% of their body weight through sweating and that's enough to affect their performance. It may be useful to use a weigh tape before your horse travels and after he gets off the lorry to ascertain how much weight he's lost from sweat. If it's more than 1% of his body weight, think about giving him a scoop of electrolytes in his water."



Yazmin in her feed room



I regularly confer with my vet and a nutritionist so I know my horses are always ready to perform at their best

- Yazmin Pinchen

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How to have fun

Top tip

➤ Slower hacks in cold weather can result in both you and your horse feeling the cold more than normal. Thermals and thick socks are a must for you, and your horse will appreciate an exercise blanket, especially if he is clipped or getting on in years.

Winter hacking

With the short days and cold weather, fitting riding around work can become more of a chore than a pleasure. Louise Kittle shows you how to make the most of your precious riding time this winter



Snow doesn't automatically put riding off the agenda, but it's important to prepare properly and ride according to the conditions on the day.

- Avoid places you don't know well. It's important you know the terrain under the white stuff – potholes and steep slopes can all be masked by a fresh fall of snow.
- It's an old tip, but it works – thoroughly grease the inside of your horse's hooves and shoes to prevent the snow sticking and forming 'stilts'.
- Be aware of the weather conditions. If there is a risk of ice forming under the snow (most likely when the temperature has warmed up and then cooled again, causing snow to melt and re-freeze), avoid riding as the ice could cause your horse to lose his footing.
- Why not get together with your yard mates and 'hack' around your paddocks? Open all the gates so that you can keep going from field to field and let your horses enjoy a leg stretch without worrying about black ice on the roads.



ALWAYS CARRY A FOLDING HOOF PICK

This is good advice for hacking in general, but particularly when there is a risk of snow balling in your horse's hooves.

So don't let winter hold you back! Get out and enjoy your horse, whatever the weather.



 Tweet us your winter hacking pictures @HorseandRiderUK

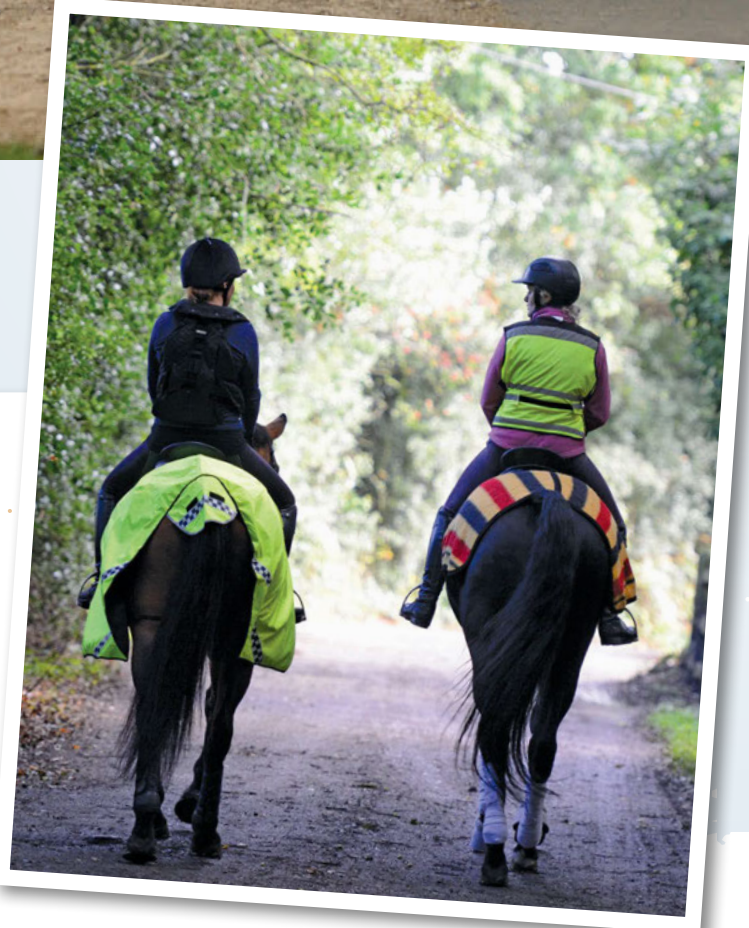


Frozen, rutted ground or slippery, wet tracks can mean that extra road work is the only way to keep your horse fit at this time of year. It's important to take precautions before setting out onto the road to ensure your and your horse's safety, and that of other road users, too.



ALWAYS WEAR HIGH-VISIBILITY CLOTHING

This means items that are both fluorescent and reflective. Fluorescent clothing shows up well in gloomy weather as well as bright sun, whereas reflective strips do just that – reflect back light from headlights and bright sun. In combination, they mean that other road users will see you up to three seconds quicker than if you weren't wearing them – the difference between a near miss and a pleasant hack. Turn to p73 for more tips on choosing high-vis clothing.



Top tips

➤ If the ground is frozen or there was ice on your car, be aware that there could be black ice on the road. Watch carefully for the telltale changes in colour and texture on the road surface.

➤ High-vis leg wraps for your horse are super-effective. They're in the direct line of sight of car drivers and, coupled with the movement of your horse's legs, are extra eye-catching.

➤ Thank other road users before they are past you. Once they have overtaken, the chance of them looking behind and seeing your 'thank you' is minimal so they will drive off thinking you have ignored their courtesy. If you can safely take a hand off the rein to thank them, then do. Otherwise, a nod and verbal thanks will do.

➤ Breezy day? Consider using an exercise sheet – you'll be surprised the difference that keeping him draught-free can make to how calm he is.



DON'T GIVE UP ON YOUR SCHOOLING

Use junctions as practice for your flatwork training. Pick a spot to halt and establish immobility, even if the road is clear, before you move off. At flared junctions, ask for a step or two of leg-yield or half-pass (depending on how fancy you're feeling) to stay close to the kerb.

- Ask your farrier to fit your horse with road nails – one in each shoe is usually enough. This will help him to grip and stop him slipping on the tarmac.
- If your horse is getting less work or turnout than he's used to, he might be feeling a little fresh, especially if it's windy. If it's safe to do so, find somewhere for a steady trot to help him settle down.
- Road work can be slower than a normal hack, but that's no excuse for being lazy – check that your horse is in front of the leg and overtracking. This tells you he is using his hindleg and working rather than slopping along.
- Always thank other road users for showing consideration – even if they don't slow as much as you'd like. Remember that non-horsey people may not be aware of how slow us riders would like them to go, so educate them through positive reinforcement rather than negative!
- If you're worried about how your horse will respond – for example, to a lorry or tractor, or even a car travelling too quickly – take preventative action rather than waiting for a problem to happen.

Ask the driver to slow or stop to ensure they pass safely. And be sure to thank them especially nicely for complying with your request!



BE A CONSIDERATE – BUT SAFE – ROAD USER

If your horse is good in traffic, you should ride in single file to allow traffic to pass. However, if he's inclined to be nervous or is inexperienced, it is safest to ride two abreast, with a confidence-giving companion between him and the traffic. Be aware that your reason for doing this isn't obvious to other road users, so move over as quickly as possible to allow them to pass safely.



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Our trainer



Steve Wallace has ridden all his life, and competed

in showjumping, eventing and dressage at all levels, including Regional and National Championships. He trains dressage horses and riders from Novice to Grand Prix, and leisure riders who ride purely for fun and pleasure. "Anyone who enjoys learning," says Steve.

Our pupil



Philippa Comley rides her 17-year-old, 17.1hh ex-eventer,

Grey Fox II (aka Ice). As an eventer, he competed to Intermediate level and now as a dressage horse, competes at Medium, working Advanced at home.

Lateral thinking

Travers

Not only is travers one of the best exercises for developing suppleness in your horse, it's also one step away from achieving half-pass, says dressage trainer Steve Wallace

As we advance up the ladder of lateral work towards the more advanced movement of half-pass, the importance of clearly and concisely administered aids to your horse must never be underestimated. But this means that you, the rider, must have a tried, tested and trusted riding technique in place, one capable of putting the message across simply but effectively to your horse in a language he understands.

Teaching your horse to respond to easy-to-follow signals and light aids should be the aim of every rider, whatever it is you're asking of him. Then with practice, these signals can be refined to establish even clearer lines of communication, which is important for creating a harmonious relationship.

This month, we continue to take the mystique out of lateral work, so that it becomes a matter of course rather than a cause for concern. Given time, practice and patience, the aids and 'feel' will become second nature, and you'll know when and how to correct any errors.

Top tip

> Travers can be ridden in walk, trot or canter. It is half of the equation to develop the half-pass, along with the shoulder-in. This is the lateral movement you are asked to perform in trot and canter in advanced dressage tests.

your horse ➤ Set him up to succeed ➤ Correcting common mistakes

Travers – the aids

- Half-halt on the outside rein, then use the inside rein to flex your horse to the inside.
- Control the bend to the inside by keeping a contact on the outside rein. This also helps prevent your horse from falling out through the shoulder.
- Put your inside leg on the girth to keep him moving down the track. The inside leg also guards the shoulder to prevent it from falling in.
- Place your outside leg behind the girth to encourage his hindquarters onto an inner track.



What is travers?

In travers, the horse is asked to travel down the long side of the arena, with his forehead (head, neck, shoulders and front legs) on the outside track and the hindquarters (hindlegs) placed on an inside track. For this reason, the exercise is also commonly referred to as 'quarters-in'.

The footfalls of the horse's four feet should be placed on four separate tracks. The horse should be flexed at the poll to the inside, and bent softly through his neck into the direction of the movement.

The angle of the hindquarters is determined by the horse's feet – they must just come onto four tracks. However, depending on the horse and how supple he becomes, this angle can be increased to develop even greater suppleness.



Top tip

► As your horse's suppleness and strength develop, the angle can be increased as a more gymnastic exercise.

What are the benefits?

Travers is one of the best exercises for developing suppleness through the length of your horse and in the joints of his hindlegs. Because you are displacing his hindquarters to the side, therefore not asking him to step under, there is no direct collecting effect from the exercise. However, because of travers' suppling effect, when collection is asked for in another area of training, the horse should be more able to cope.

Not only does travers benefit the horse, it also improves the rider's understanding and ability to co-ordinate a new set of aids. Dressage is not about how strong you are, but about how well you apply the aids to train your horse up the levels.

How to ride it

Travers, like all the lateral exercises, requires accurate riding to prevent you from drifting off your line. To help you, therefore, first ride travers down the long side of the arena on the outside track – the fence line will help guide you along a straight line. Begin with a few strides in walk.

Prepare on the apex of the corner at the beginning of the long side. Half-halt on the outside rein then with the inside rein, flex your horse to the inside. The flat of your horse's face should be looking straight at the fence on the short side, not into the centre of the arena, and his chest and front legs should be almost facing directly down the track.

Keep your inside leg at the girth to maintain the forwardness and to keep your horse's front legs on the outside track. Your outside leg should come back behind the girth, to instruct your horse to move his hindquarters onto an inside track. Try to maintain an even contact on both reins.

Once in the travers, look up and through your horse's ears to check that you are still on the correct line. Also, remember to look at your





Beware!

➤ As Philippa comes off the short side of the arena, her inside leg has come too far forward. This will allow the hindquarters to move too much to the inner track, creating an angle that is too big.

horse's neck to ensure you have asked for the correct bend and flexion, and not exaggerated either. Sit evenly in the saddle, and make sure that you are sitting upright and carrying yourself, so that you do not adversely affect his balance.

Your horse should have his face looking directly down the track. When riding travers,

look where you are going through your horse's ears. While it is not correct to move your head to look down and check the position of your horse's neck, it is absolutely fine to use your eyes only to have a quick glance down and check that he is in the correct position. And better to check than to get it wrong!

Dressage is not about how strong you are, but about how well you can co-ordinate a set of aids to train your horse up the levels

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What went wrong?

You twist your upper body

How to put it right When this happens, the effectiveness of your inside leg is lost, which means the positioning of the horse is lost (see right). So remember to sit with your weight evenly distributed over the saddle and to concentrate on carrying yourself tall from your waist.



Avoid twisting in the saddle – sit tall

The horse lacks impulsion

How to put it right This can happen when you first ask your horse to move his legs laterally. Although your legs are placed in different positions on his side, remember to use both of them to encourage him to move with the same rhythm he'd be in if travelling straight. If your horse learns the lateral exercises in walk first, it will then be easier for him in trot and canter.



Not enough flexion in the neck



The forward movement is blocked



Perfect – on four tracks and looking straight down the track



There is too much or too little angle

How to put it right Horses will find one rein easier than the other. If your horse offers too much angle, ask for less. If he doesn't offer enough, gradually ask for more.

Above, even though Philippa has pushed Ice's quarters onto an inner track, he has no flexion or bend in his neck to the inside. So the movement is more leg-yield than travers.

Above centre, Ice is looking too much to the left and not directly in the direction he is travelling. Philippa's left hand is crossing over the withers – the effect of this blocks the horse's forward movement, something that should never be sacrificed in lateral work.

Above right, Ice's position is correct and he is just on four tracks. Plus, he is looking straight down the track.

Don't block him, otherwise he'll find the movement difficult

Moving forward

As you develop your and your horse's ability and understanding of shoulder-in and travers, you can start linking the two exercises together. This should be done on the long side of the arena. Therefore, from the corner, start with shoulder-in. At the next marker, change to travers then at the next marker, go back to shoulder-in, and so on. This will lead us on to the half-pass in next month's issue.

★★★ Rate this feature

Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Next month

How to handle the half-pass.



Parting ways

How exactly do you go about selling your horse? From getting the advert right to waving goodbye, there are a lot of things to consider

Words: Kelly McCarthy-Maine. Photos courtesy of spidge.co.uk, eastcoastphotographs.co.uk, johnbrittenphotography.co.uk, waynejonesphotography.com

When I bought my beautiful, wild-eyed and long-legged Lola Rose, I was aiming for sponsored rides and dabbling in the occasional riding club competition. Over the three years we spent together, we progressed to the Riding Club Championships, classes at Hickstead, affiliated eventing and flying hedges out hunting.

Although Lola had the ability and the temperament to compete at a high level, as a sturdily-built 17.3hh part-Shire, I worried about how her body would cope as I asked

her to jump bigger and gallop faster. She was a trier and a goer and would never, ever say 'No', but she just wasn't built for what I wanted to do. I felt responsible for Lola's long-term wellbeing and knew I had to find her a less competitive home where she could thrive, be adored and enjoy a long and happy career.

But how exactly do you go about selling your horse of a lifetime? I learnt a lot through the process, so if you are considering selling your horse, I hope my experience helps make the process a little easier on your heart and mind.

Horse for sale

'Eight-year-old big bay mare' often doesn't tell the whole story

I wrote a typically impersonal 'Horse for sale' advert and then felt really funny about it. I wanted to say so much more about my lovely horse than a 50-word ad and a couple of photos would allow. So I sat down and wrote honestly about my decision to sell her – with the addition of a little gushing and photographs – and posted it to my Facebook page.

Dozens of friends posted comments, and we had a big discussion about my reasons for selling her and shared some memories of our adventures together. Several friends shared the advert, trainers and instructors who had worked with us in the past offered to act as 'character references', and word gradually spread that Lola was for sale.

What I learnt The people who knew me and the horse I was selling were my best agents to find a like-minded person to take her on to her next adventure. For me, Facebook may as well be called 'Horsebook', as most of what I post is about the horses I ride. To my friends, photos of Lola and I doing something fun was a familiar sight. In the end, I think that helped sell her.

Action A simple advert might work for you, but give social media and word of mouth a whirl – you never know how many friends-of-friends are looking.

Talk it through with your friends

My friends were a huge help through the selling process. It was over a few glasses of wine at a friend's girly night in that I first braved mentioning the idea of selling Lola. They helped me talk through the reasons for selling her and eventually we came to terms with the choice I was making for my horse.

What I learnt From when I decided to sell Lola to the day she left, two of my best horsey friends were on virtual stand-by with tissues and a bottle of something cold. Our friendship was knitted together from the backs of our horses and they dropped everything the night she left to help me get through the shock of actual separation.

Action Your horsey friends will understand – and sympathise better than most. So don't be shy about admitting how you feel. Selling a horse can be a rollercoaster of emotion and you will need all the support you can get.



Help with the wardrobe department

When it came to packing up Lola's things, at first I felt tempted to hang on to as much as possible, as a reminder of my beautiful mare. But I quickly realised that the custom-made bridle, headcollar with an engraved nameplate and a nearly-new 7ft 3in heavyweight rug weren't going to do anyone any good up in my attic.

What I learnt Memories are in your head, not attached to your stuff. Ask the new owner if they would like to see any of the horse's gear that you will not need and come up with reasonable prices to sell them.

Action Buying a horse is a big expense. Not only does the purchaser have the cost of the horse to consider, they will have shelled out for a vetting, maybe a deposit on a stable and transport expenses. See if you can help them save a little money by offering some of the horse's wardrobe at reasonable prices.

Hand over the reins but keep a check on the heart strings

I loved Lola and knew her inside out – every quirk and nose wrinkle, her preference for bananas over carrots and the closely guarded secret to successfully clipping her ears. But by selling her, I knew I was relinquishing rights to a favourite childhood idea that the horse will always 'like you best'. She wasn't mine anymore and I knew it was in her best interest to like – love – her new owner most.

What I learnt The relationship your horse has with their new owner will be every bit as special as the one that you built together. Horses are generous souls, who will respond to another person's kindness just as wholeheartedly as they did to yours.

Action Help your horse start his journey with his new owner as best you can, by acknowledging it will be as unique and important as the one you enjoyed together. Spend some time making a note of any quirks, habits, likes and dislikes so the new owner can get off to as good a start as possible.

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Blipp the Trojan Horse or visit **www.esrw.co.uk** to test your knowledge on ESRW and speak to your vet or SQP about responsible worm control.



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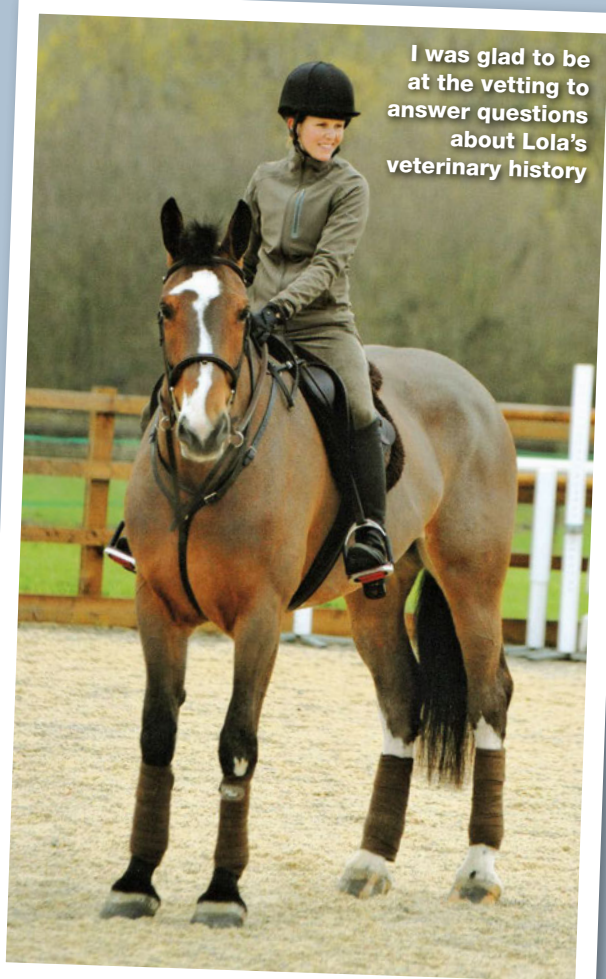
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Be present at the vetting

I knew I wanted to be part of the vetting process. I brought action photos (confession: I showed the poor vet the 'Lola album'), and did the trotting up and ridden assessment myself. And I was glad to be on hand to answer questions the vet had about Lola's veterinary history or any past injuries.

What I learnt Vets are people, too. Sharing a nice moment looking at photos of a happy horse doing the job they were being vetted to do meant we started the process off on an optimistic note. Being at the vetting in person can also help you establish a clear understanding of the veterinary picture, if the prospective purchaser wants to negotiate on price following the examination.

Action If at all possible, be at the vetting personally. Consider taking a day off work if necessary. If you really cannot be there yourself, arrange for an experienced deputy who knows your horse, his history and how to get you on the phone (very quickly) if there is a question they can't answer.



I was glad to be at the vetting to answer questions about Lola's veterinary history

Do your homework

I knew the day Lola was sold would be an emotional one, so I did my homework about the logistical side of it all. I prepared a bill of sale, noting the agreed purchase price as well as the addresses and contact details of buyer and seller.

What I learnt Do the admin in advance and always have two copies of the paperwork.

Action When a sale is finalised, have each party sign both copies of the bill of sale, keeping one for yourself. Make sure the money is in your account before the horse leaves your care, and don't forget to give notice to your vet and insurance company that the horse has been sold. Ensure you complete the relevant sections of his passport, too, before handing it over.

Don't emotionally terrorise the horse

While I knew in my heart that Lola was going to an exceptional home with an owner who would treasure her, I did have to eat a bar of chocolate and wipe away tears whenever I thought of actually handing over the reins. I wanted the new owner to fully experience 'Lola: Day 1', to giggle nervously and feel overcome with joy when handed the lead rope for the first time. And me crying in the corner didn't factor well into what should be a happy scene!

So I arranged for my incredible and trustworthy yard manager to manage the handover. I knew she would get the documents signed, help load up the bags of feed, make sure Lola was ready to travel safely and even load her if required. As far as Lola was concerned, she was going somewhere fun with a nice lady – so she marched up the ramp into her new life and didn't look back.

What I learnt By all means whisper in your horse's ear that he will always be safe and cared for, ask him to be good and tell him that you love him. But weeping into his mane and howling outside his stable will only unsettle him. So if you are going to be a wreck on the day he leaves, don't be at the yard when the new owner comes to pick up their horse.

Action Be honest with yourself about how emotional you feel. If necessary, arrange a yard manager or someone who isn't as involved to help on the day. It's important your horse leaves his home feeling as calm as possible.

Feed and routine



Early on in my life with Lola, she was mistakenly switched to a feed containing barley – and my normally sane horse danced and jigged for a week. I wanted Lola to behave herself while she adjusted to her new routine, so I gave her new owner as much insight as I could about her feed, fitness level and routine – and suggested things like lungeing and plenty of turnout to help with the transition.

What I learnt Making a list of the last shoeing, dentist visit, worming and vaccination helps the new owner organise their own support team in time for the horse's arrival.

Action Pack up a couple of weeks' feed and write down what your horse's daily routine has been. If he is ridden daily and goes on the horse walker for 45 minutes every afternoon, letting the new owner know he is quite fit will help everyone make a safe – and happy – transition.

Make your plan and move on

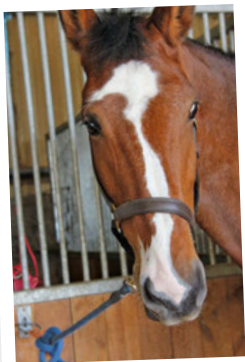
Selling my superstar Lola knocked my confidence. Lola had been my anchor and I felt lost with my younger horses for a couple of weeks after she left. It wasn't until I burst into tears in the middle of a lesson and confessed to my coach what I was feeling that I turned a corner. Having just retired a top horse herself a few weeks previously, we stood side-by-side in the sun for a few minutes, sniffing and looking down at our horse's manes. Once we had composed ourselves, we picked up the reins and carried on with the exercise.

What I learnt Heartbreak is part of life with horses and selling one of my favourites was tough. Selling Lola did make me realise that every moment we share with our horses is precious, and that I should cherish the journey I'm starting with my young horses every step of the way.

Action Whether you're taking time out from horse ownership, buying a new horse yourself or changing your horsey goals, be brave, do what is best in the long run for you and your horse, and trust your instincts. You don't have to feel guilty for selling your horse to the right person.



Lola's new owner, Laura Cartwright, tells her side of the story



When I saw Kelly's advert for Lola, I was shocked and my heart rate quickly increased! I'd seen Lola and Kelly grow together via Facebook and could tell they had a special bond. I realised that although this was a huge decision for Kelly, there were possibilities for me. Other events were happening at the time and

there was a feeling of fate in the air so, after talking it through with my best horsey friend, I picked up the phone.

My horse, Ben, and I had been experiencing peaks and troughs, and after four years of trying to fix his many physical issues and losing my confidence, I felt guilty because taking on Lola Rose would mean closing a chapter and retiring Ben.

I was also being interviewed for a new job. If I was successful, I would have a 10-minute commute to work via the stables instead of hours commuting daily to London. So the outcome of the interview was the difference between yes and no to buying Lola. I called Kelly and offered to buy Lola as soon as I was offered the job!

I knew Kelly previously from being based at the same livery yard. This helped us to be really open and honest about our circumstances, and to decide if Lola Rose and I were a good fit.

Knowing Lola was 'the one' was the easy part! Cantering effortlessly across Salisbury Plain in the driving January rain and loving the moment made up my mind.

Every time I ride Lola, my confidence increases and with each experience we share, I'm getting to know her better, squeaks and all! Ben is much happier since he retired, so this worked out for the best for all of us!

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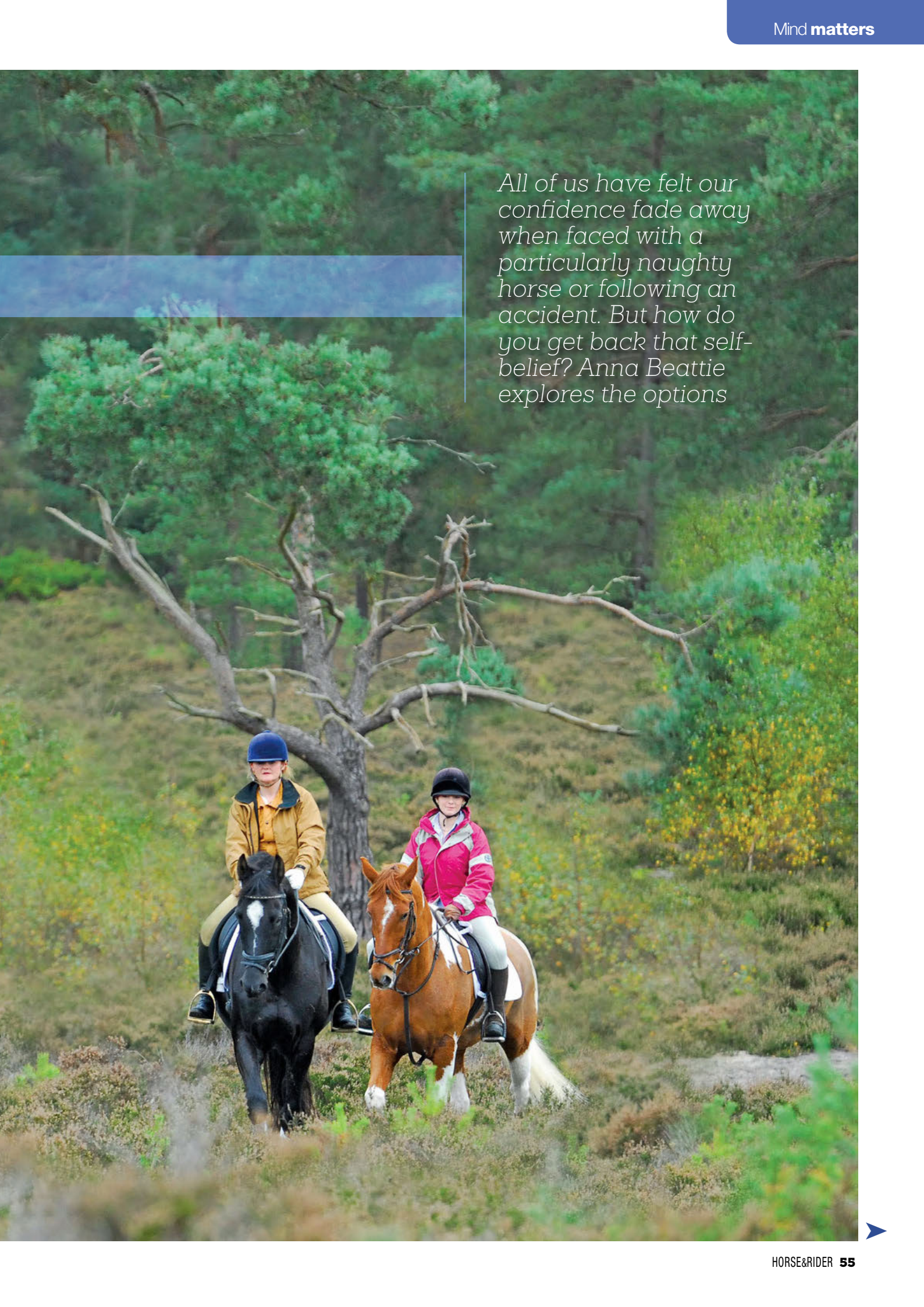
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Confidence

for equestrians

Photos: Bob Atkins

A full-page photograph of two riders on horses in a forest. The rider on the left is on a dark horse, wearing a blue helmet and a tan jacket. The rider on the right is on a brown and white horse, wearing a black helmet and a pink jacket. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a dense forest with green trees and a large, bare tree in the center. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

All of us have felt our confidence fade away when faced with a particularly naughty horse or following an accident. But how do you get back that self-belief? Anna Beattie explores the options

Ask any rider and they will tell you that confidence is an essential ingredient in a successful partnership with their horse. When we have it, we are barely aware that it is there: motivating us, enhancing our performance and encouraging us to raise our game. But what happens when an accident or some other trauma in our lives knocks our self-belief for six?

A loss of confidence can become paralysing, undermining our efforts to achieve our goals and robbing us of the enjoyment we usually experience with our horses. It happens to everyone at some point, from professional riders gripped with fear at the prospect of going cross-country after a bad fall, to the happy hacker making excuses not to leave the yard for fear of the potential hazards lying in wait and their horse's reaction to them.

Increasingly, riders are recognising the impact a lack of confidence can have and are taking proactive steps to regain control. More people than ever are using alternative coaching methods to help them, from hypnotherapy and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to Thought Field Therapy (TFT).

Sports psychologists have been exploiting the link between the brain and body to improve top athletes' performances for many years. Two household names who regularly use visualisation (a common factor in NLP, TFT and hypnotherapy) are Andy Murray and Jessica Ennis-Hill. Visualisation acts not only as a mental rehearsal for a successful performance, but also conditions your reactions to cope with problems. The London 2012 Olympic equestrian teams benefited from a sports psychologist who delivered relaxation, goal-setting and visualisation strategies for optimum performance under pressure. So what do these coaching methods involve?

Alternative coaching methods

Hypnotherapy involves creating a relaxed or hypnotic state in which our unconscious minds are more open to positive changes in our patterns of behaviour or feelings. Practitioners use a variety of methods to induce a hypnotic state, including the use of language patterns and repeated phrases, breathing exercises and visualisation.



Do you imagine the worst-case scenario?

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) uses language to change patterns of behaviour. Practitioners hope to recreate the 'ingredients' of a successful performance through visualisation and then use these 'ingredients' to improve or replace existing, negative patterns of behaviour. Visualisation uses multiple senses, such as sight, sound and smell, to build a vivid mental image of a positive scenario. This helps prepare the brain and body to react in the same way in a real situation.

Thought Field Therapy (TFT) involves visualising a specific problem (such as anxiety caused by competing) while being guided through a sequence of 'tapping' with your fingers on specific points of the body. These points are known as 'Energy Meridian Points' and are the same as those used in the practice of acupuncture, with roots in Chinese medicine. According to practitioners, these patterns of tapping, or 'algorithms', diffuse the trigger which is the root cause of your stress: you remember the problem perfectly, but remove the emotional upset which usually accompanies it.

Case study

We follow *Horse&Rider* reader Andy Atherton as he has two sessions with therapist Catherine Smith.

Andy Atherton runs a livery yard and also owns four horses: Guinness, a happy hacker, Murphy and Nero, purchased as foals, and Hannah, a Hanoverian mare. He has lost his confidence, particularly with jumping. **Catherine Smith** owns Thoroughbred George. Her nerves inspired her to find out more about TFT and NLP. After attending a course to deal with her own confidence issues, she trained as a TFT and NLP practitioner. Today she runs One Life Therapies, and uses a range of strategies from all three coaching methods to help equestrians with confidence issues.



Session one

Catherine begins her session with Andy by sharing her own background with horses. She explains: "Back in 2008, you wouldn't have got me on a horse. You certainly wouldn't have got me over a jump. I would have turned green and started shaking. That's what got me interested in these coaching methods and, to be honest, they have got me to where I am today. I am a happy first-time horse owner and I can deal with the little challenges that are part and parcel of owning George."

"The stories I hear are so common. We have a tendency to feel isolated when we lose our confidence, assuming that everyone is so much more capable and fearless, but it's really not the case. I've dealt with riders at every level and loss of confidence affects us all at some point or other, regardless of our backgrounds."

The session continues with Catherine asking Andy about his own experiences as a rider. He explains: "I did all the groundwork and backed both of my youngsters, so I might look quite self-assured to someone meeting me for the first time. But appearances can be deceiving and my lack of confidence is a big issue for me. I force myself to get on a horse, even though I'm scared, and jumping is proving to be a real source of anxiety."

"I will jump 30cm, but I have to force myself over that jump and, although it doesn't make sense, I'll actually lose my confidence the more times I jump it. I just keep thinking to myself, 'What if I fall off? What if Murphy refuses?'. These negative thoughts take over – I want to do it, but I'm not enjoying it."

Catherine asks Andy to focus on the incident that causes him the most anxiety. She then uses a range of visualisation techniques to recreate the negative feelings associated with the jump, using the five senses to stimulate Andy's imagination. She asks Andy to rate his anxiety levels when imagining jumping the fence, then guides him through a specific pattern of tapping at energy points on his body. This pattern is revisited at key points during the session. Catherine also draws on a range of techniques from TFT, NLP and hypnotherapy, dependent on Andy's responses.

"Everyone is different," she says, "so I personalise the session based on their preferences. Initially, Andy found some of the visualisation exercises challenging, but he responded well to the hypnosis at the end of the session. I find that many people become more adept at certain skills through practice, so their needs might change over a series of sessions."

At certain points during the session, Catherine asks Andy to visualise the fence again and then rate his anxiety levels. He is surprised when these levels gradually drop. Andy says: "Although I was very open-minded about the session, I was still taken aback at the rate at which my negative feelings subsided. Of course, the proof will be putting them into practice at home when actually faced with that jump." The session finished with Catherine giving Andy a set of exercises to practice.

Session two

Four weeks later, Andy explains: "I found the exercises really beneficial, particularly the tapping technique Catherine gave me to try. You do have to invest the time and effort, though. It's not a 'quick fix' to confidence issues. One thing I noticed was that while I had fewer very negative 'what if' moments when jumping, I was conscious of a gap in my jumping technique that I felt was still holding me back and making me doubt my ability."



Reducing boredom in the stable



Winter often signals an increase in the time that an equine spends stabled, enforced by weather and a reduction in grazing available. However, lengthier periods of stabling can leave horses bored and frustrated, potentially resulting in undesirable behaviours and even a decline in overall health and condition. So, reducing boredom can become a balancing act between keeping a stabled horse physically healthy and also psychologically happy. Horslyx gives us their top tips for beating the boredom this season.

- By allowing equines to carry out natural behaviour even when confined, horse owners can help curb stress levels and keep boredom at bay.
- It is important that a horse has access to plenty of good quality forage, such as hay or haylage, particularly if they are stabled overnight, to encourage natural trickle feeding. This not only supports healthy digestion, but aids mental stability and happiness, as horses have a natural, psychological need to chew.
- Many horse owners may choose to offer some restricted turnout, such as an hour in a sand school, pen or small paddock to allow the horse some freedom of movement, preferably with another horse for company. However, if this is not viable, it is often best to stable horses next to each other, or at least in clear sight of others, so that they are not completely deprived of social contact and do not begin to feel too isolated.
- The stabled or part-stabled horse may also begin to develop negative behaviours, such as crib biting, weaving and wind sucking as a result of stress and boredom and exhibiting these stereotypical behaviours can become an addictive means of coping with being confined. A plentiful supply of correctly balanced nutrition is a solution to maintaining all-round health and reducing boredom before behaviour becomes a serious issue.



Balance the boredom

Horslyx offers a high specification package of vitamins and minerals to help balance deficiencies in forage or grazing. The palatable lick promotes a natural trickle-feeding pattern, allowing the horse to self regulate and consume Horslyx as and when it is needed, resulting in a well supported digestive system and minimal stress levels. Horslyx is available in a variety of sizes and in four different

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For more winter care tips and advice visit www.horslyx.com

Putting it into practice

Following feedback from Andy, Catherine suggests a joint session involving the delivery of her coaching methods before, during and after a jumping lesson delivered by qualified riding instructor, Sarah Linton. Catherine explains: "I get a lot of clients who come to me feeling very frustrated. They have tried to deal with a confidence issue by getting lesson after lesson and, unfortunately, sometimes the problem doesn't go away. Being confident is great, but without the technical ability to back it up, it isn't a recipe for success, either. Sarah and I find that this dual approach works really well for some clients."

It certainly proves to be the case for Andy. The lesson takes place on a stormy day. "Before meeting Catherine, you wouldn't have got me in the saddle in this weather, never mind over a jump," Andy jokes. "I would have made an excuse and put it off. I feel so much more positive now and really enjoyed having the input from both Catherine and Sarah. I can't really believe the results!"

By the close of the session, Andy is happily jumping a 70cm upright on Murphy – something

he wouldn't have contemplated a month ago. Catherine and Sarah are pleased with the results, never losing sight of the key objective, which is to inject enjoyment back into Andy's riding. "The main thing is that Andy is happy. He's actually smiling when he's jumping, which is brilliant to see," says Catherine at the end of the session.

Andy is quick to note that a two-pronged approach has had the most lasting effect. "Having both the confidence strategies and feedback into my riding technique worked wonders for me. My next goal is to jump a 50cm course in a competitive environment. It's strange to actually feel excited about that idea, rather than dreading it."

*The main thing is
that Andy is happy.
He's actually smiling
when he's jumping*



Try this at home

Catherine Smith shares two exercises to help put you in a positive frame of mind. Remember that practice makes perfect with both these techniques – you will need to repeat them a number of times to achieve good results.

Peripheral vision

- Look up and focus your attention on a spot high up on the wall in front of you. Keep focusing on that spot for a minute or two, taking in all the details: colours, light or shadows. You are now using tunnel vision.
- Let your mind relax, and allow your awareness to expand outwards and soften your focus. What can you sense to your left and right? Keep focusing on the spot, but allow yourself to become aware of shapes and details out of the corners of both eyes.
- Continue to allow your awareness to expand and, as you do so, allow your jaw to relax. Once more, notice an even wider field of vision.
- When you have achieved a state of relaxation, bring your eyes down and focus on a spot directly in front of you.
- Allow your focal point to remain central, with a soft focus. Notice what is different about your breathing, your body and your mind. You may find that your breathing has become deeper and more even, and that your muscles are feeling more relaxed.

Basic NLP anchoring

Remember a specific time when you felt completely confident, in control and self-assured. It doesn't necessarily have to be a positive memory of riding, but the stronger and more vivid the memory, the better it will work as an 'anchor'.

Close your eyes and remember that feeling in detail. To intensify the experience, ask yourself:

- What can you see? Make the colours brighter and bolder. Can you magnify the image in your mind's eye? Can you move the image closer and closer, taking in more and more detail?
- What can you hear? Imagine the sounds amplified, increasing in volume.
- How do you feel? Can you double the intensity of that feeling? Picture the feeling as an enormous wave crashing over you. Imagine 'spinning' the feeling around and around, faster and faster.

Timing is crucial at this point. When you feel that this positive, confident feeling is at its most powerful, anchor it with a physical signal – for instance, press your forefinger and thumb together, pull your ear lobe, make a fist or even say a word.

Now relax and test the 'anchor'. Make your signal or say your word. Does this action trigger off those feelings of confidence? If not, repeat the process, focusing on making the positive recollection as real as possible. With practice, you will be able to use your 'anchor' to recall those positive feelings when you need them most.

Remember a specific time when you felt completely confident, in control and self-assured



Web extra



Go online to find out how *Horse&Rider* reader Cath used hypnotherapy to get her over her fear of jumping, following a bad fall.
horseandrideruk.com

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Ridinglife

This issue, Wendy Jago discusses how difficult endings can be the start of new beginnings, in all walks of life

Our trainer



For many people, as well as reward and recreation,

riding offers escape from their off-horse lives. Yet the struggles and successes we have in communicating with our horses are often similar to those we experience with colleagues, friends and families.

NLP riding coach and List 3 Dressage Judge **Wendy Jago** explains how much you may have to gain by bringing your two worlds together.

Saying goodbye to our beloved animals is never an easy option. But when the time comes to end that special bond, it can be the kindest thing we humans can do.

The issue

Over the years, I have owned seven cats and have had to have four put down. I have also owned six horses, had four put down and sold one on. I would guess that many of you will have had similar experiences, struggling with frustration to make some relationships work better, grieving and agonising at the prospect of their loss, making hard decisions and mourning them afterwards.

I made my decisions because it seemed right for the animals. For some, age and illness compromised their quality of life. For others, accident or illness meant ending their short lives prematurely. While my grief may have softened as time has passed, they can still be vivid in my memories.

The approach

Early in my dressage career, I was writing for an elderly judge. Our class schedule had gaps, which we filled by chatting. "You know," she said, "taking responsibility for our animals' lives means we owe them to make decisions about their deaths, too. And that means putting their interests before ours." I remembered her words later when my first horse, already retired, became arthritic. Had the time come? A friend who is more experienced with horse care than I am came to have a look. "Not quite time yet," was his judgement. "He'll let you know when it is." And a while later he did, showing me by his weary steps and depressed expression that he no longer looked forward to being turned out or brought in again. He'd had enough.

For some owners, deciding to sell a horse is just as difficult – perhaps more so because physical suffering doesn't provide the justification. This horse is healthy. You and he may even get on well enough, but maybe he's been outgrown, is too big, dislikes doing what you bought him for... Or maybe you're just incompatible. The more you persevere before

finally moving him on, the more hope, time, money and emotion you invest in the partnership. And the greater your investment, the harder it can be to accept that it's time to call time.

There's an interesting parallel here with ending human relationships. Seeing our animal suffering can give us strength to make the decision that will end it. And when we do, feeling that we have saved them further pain, we rarely feel guilty. It's rather different when we give someone the sack at work or tell our partner we want to end the relationship. Guilt can creep in. Yet although relationships with people are more complex, sometimes they need clear, clean, rapid endings, too.

What next?

We can draw insight and strength from our relationships with animals to help us here. Emotional misery can be as debilitating as physical, and hanging on after we've realised things aren't working is damaging to them as well as us. Ending a partnership could actually give both parties a chance of something better.

However, in a final hope of rescue, we could first go with them to a new trainer, counsellor, management refresher or team-building course. But if none of these work, don't hope they'll make the decision for you. Draw a line. Make a clean break.

When I was 22 and in my first job, I complained to my boss about someone whose work I supervised. He told me to sack her there and then. In those days, sacking someone wasn't surrounded by the processes that make it a fairer – and more drawn-out – process today. Within hours, I found myself telling someone my own age that her work wasn't satisfactory and she had to go. Doing this was awful. I tried to be calm, objective and clear – this wasn't about her as a person, but about her performance at work.

Years later, she moved into a house in our road and we chatted from time to time without tension and without once referring to the past. I guess – I hope – that despite my inexperience and anxiety, I'd managed to draw the bottom line of reality in a way that set both of us free.

Endings are mysterious things. By meeting them honestly and decisively, we can change direction in a way that is without regret. As T S Eliot wrote: "In my end is my beginning".





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Q&A



Jane van Lennep
BSc, MSc, NPSD,
BHS SM offers
advice on breeding,
stable management
and endurance riding.



Deidre Carson
BVSc(Syd),
MRCVS is a
partner at
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Rossdale & Partners.



Minette Rice
Edwards trains
up to Grand Prix
level dressage
and also
teaches jumping.



Natalie Waran BSc
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Professor of
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Claire Williams is
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Q&A



Q Why is my 16.1hh Thoroughbred's poo so small and my 15.2hh cob's so large?

Jane van Lennep answers:

As horse owners, we are obsessed with poo. From our earliest stable management lessons, we are taught all about horse poo as this reflects general health. However, we are not always taught some obvious things, such as the relationship between input and output.

The more a horse eats, the more poo he makes. And

the more he eats, the faster it goes through the gut. But the faster it goes through the gut, the less the amount of moisture absorbed in the hindgut, so poos will be softer and bigger.

Less risk of colic

We're told that 'normal' horses do eight to 12 piles, but this is misleading, because a horse fed correctly – ie, with ad lib access to

forage – will produce around 20 piles.

A lot of information originated from the army, where horses were rationed to 10lb (4.5kg) of oats and hay a day. But an average 500kg horse is reckoned to eat 2.5% of his body weight in dry matter – 12.5kg – a lot more than the army horse's 9kg. Result? More poo, but less risk of colic and ulcers.

If your Thoroughbred eats proportionately less than the cob, perhaps because he eats more slowly or has more of his diet as

Top tip

► You can tell a lot about your horse's health by the state of his poo, so don't be shy about keeping a close eye on it!

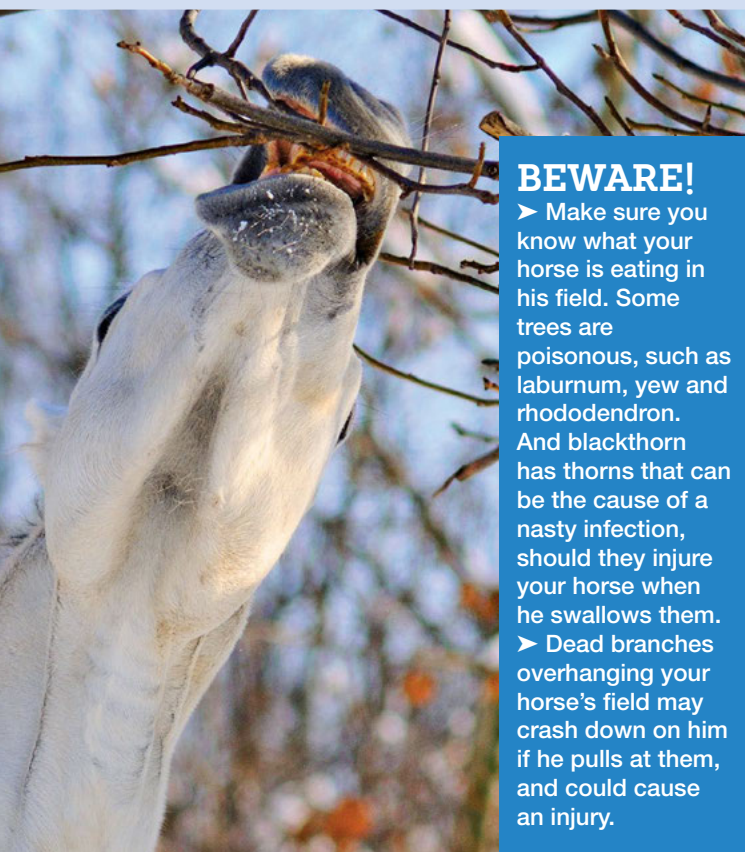
concentrates, not only will he make less poo, but it will go through his gut slower and get more dried up – therefore making the poos even smaller. And if his anus is smaller, the poos will be squeezed out smaller as well. Anxious horses pass droppings more often than laid-back ones, so there will be less each time.

Eating faster

Your cob's poos are probably bigger because he eats more! Cobs eat faster than more highly-strung breeds, so can get more down in the time. They may also not be as fussy and spend less time looking around for the nicest areas of grass.

What's more, if the cob works for less time than the Thoroughbred, he will have more time for eating. He probably spends all his time with his head down, whereas the Thoroughbred will be more alert and spend time looking about and moving around.





BEWARE!

► Make sure you know what your horse is eating in his field. Some trees are poisonous, such as laburnum, yew and rhododendron. And blackthorn has thorns that can be the cause of a nasty infection, should they injure your horse when he swallows them.

► Dead branches overhanging your horse's field may crash down on him if he pulls at them, and could cause an injury.

Laid bare...

Q My horse eats bare branches in winter. Are there any benefits to him doing this and will they harm him?

Jane van Lennep answers:

Horses are obligate herbivores. They are also grazing animals, so a lot of tree browsing is not their first means of acquiring nutrition, yet a little nibbling here and there does no harm! But horses should have adequate nutrition in the form of grazing or, failing that, hay, to meet the bulk of their nutritional needs.

Exercise

Tree bark enables horses to exercise their incisors which, on a stabled diet, is sometimes lacking – and tree branches are better to eat than stable doors!

However, you must take care with the branches being gnawed. Some trees

– for example, willow and fruit – have very tasty branches, but if the bark is removed from the circumference of the branch, the rest will die.

Ground level

A horse eating with his head high is not recommended, because the jaw slides back a little and the teeth do not align correctly. The teeth of a horse work best when the head is down. The lower jaw is particularly heavy because it is dense and strong, and this will slide the jaw forward into the best position for chewing.

This is why it is best to feed horses from ground level – after all, it's what they've spent the last 30 million years doing!

Coat of many colours

Q My grey horse is covered in lovely dapples at the moment. How and why do they develop on a horse's coat?

Jane van Lennep answers:

Grey horses are born the colour they would have been if they were not destined to go grey. Popular opinion has it that they are born black or a very dark colour, but they can be born any colour – bay, chestnut, even palomino – and will be a stronger shade of the colour than those destined to remain that colour and not go grey.

As they gradually turn grey and lose more colour, many develop dapples. The white rings reflect the presence of small blood vessels below the skin and these go greyer quicker where the skin is warmer. So the areas under the mane, down the jugular groove and on the face all tend to fade faster than the rest of the body. Dapples may appear on a dark grey horse, then will gradually fade to white or

possibly flea-bitten grey.

Dapples on a bay or chestnut, for instance, are more correctly termed 'hammer marks', because they resemble the marks left by the hammer on beaten copper. They are taken to be a sign of good health and nutrition with plenty of minerals and omega-3, and are usually seen on a horse who is in good condition.

Did you know?

► Dapples are also associated with the gene for the colour Silver Dapple. The mane and tail are silvery, and the body is a pale liver colour, but with pronounced dapples or circles of lighter colour.

The white rings go greyer quicker where the skin is warmer

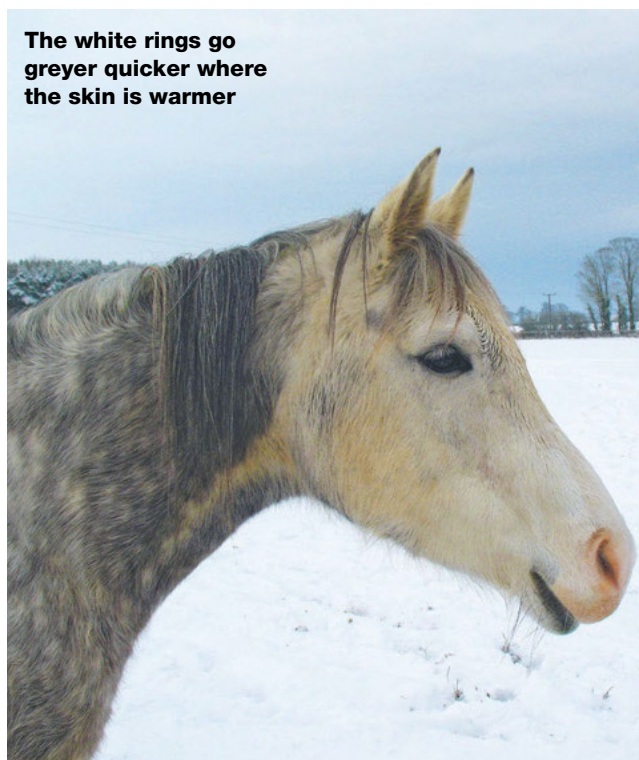


Photo: Jane van Lennep

Horsey headaches

Q After some debate on our yard, we were wondering if horses get headaches. Do they?

Natalie Waran answers:

A headache is something most people will have experienced at some point in their life, and it consists of pain that seems to come from the head or neck area. Headaches in humans are triggered by a multitude of causes and we rely on a person's self-report to tell us about the location and extent of the pain.

While I could find no examples of research specifically about headaches in horses, there has been work carried out to look at the effectiveness of anti-migraine medication on

laboratory rats who have headaches induced to mimic human pain. So it is likely that horses are capable of experiencing headaches, but whether or not they are triggered by the same sort of things as human headaches is unclear.

Observation

It's difficult to know whether or not animals are experiencing a painful condition, including a headache. This is because pain is an emotional and personal experience, and because animals cannot tell us where they hurt and how much pain they are in.

However, careful objective observation of your horse can help identify the area and, indeed, how uncomfortable he is.

Recent research looking at measuring pain in horses has identified key behaviours that do change consistently in horses experiencing pain. These include...

- avoiding environmental or human contact – for example, by standing with their head pointed into the back corner of the stable.
- yawning.
- restlessness, such as weight shifting from one back leg to another.
- a reduction in normal

behaviours, such as eating and resting.

Responsibility

The main thing to remember is that horse ownership comes with a huge responsibility, because you have a communication challenge when it comes to discussing issues such as pain and stress. It is, therefore, up to you to ensure his wellbeing is maintained at a high level by being an excellent observer, being quick to deal with whatever might be causing the problem for your horse and always giving him the benefit of the doubt.

Top tip

➤ If you think your horse may be in pain, watch his body language. For example, more specific indicators that your horse may be in discomfort in his head or neck might include postural changes, including head lowering or hanging down, and head shaking (right).



Q & A

Cow companions

Q On the way to work, I see a horse in a field with two cows. I know horses are herd animals and need others around them, but will this horse be happy with his two bovine companions?

Natalie Waran answers:

I had a young horse who lived with a Jersey cow for a while and they seemed to be very bonded. However, when we decided to separate them, both horse and cow became quite agitated. It made me question whether or not horses could form meaningful relationships with other species and if this was adequate replacement for their own kind.

Herd animal

I suppose we need to consider what being a social herd animal is about and what function social behaviour has for a horse. Horses are described as a social prey species and will actively seek the company

of their own species and familiar group-mates. Being social means that the horse benefits from superior predator detection (many eyes make light work!) and that they can more easily protect their young. The downside is that they have to share resources and deal with the social pressure involved with being surrounded by other group-mates.

The horse has evolved sophisticated social behaviour to ensure that groups can live together with all of the benefits and fewer of the problems. This relies on a stable group of horses who know one another well and are often related in some way, and with members who have learnt appropriate and effective social signals so



as to reduce any problems with aggression.

Introductions

Living with another species means that there are some of the benefits, but unless both species have learnt to recognise each other's social signals, there is the possibility that the situation could be stressful to one or another. If you plan to mix species, you

must make sure that any introductions are gradual, there is space to escape, plenty of resources available and that the animals are monitored to ensure they are not stressed or frightened.

There are many situations where horses and cows, or sheep, are mixed successfully and appear to be quite content. It just takes a bit of care and a lot of observation!

Tell-tail signs

Q When horses trot past my horse's field, he gets very excited, and will snort and show off with a flashy trot. He'll also lift his tail over his back, but why does he do this?

Horse&Rider answers:

Tail postures tell us a lot about our horse's behaviour. For example, if it's held flat against his bum, it can indicate fear or cold. If it's being swished, he may be expressing his unhappiness at an irritant fly – or rider! Perhaps, for instance, he's

reacting to a rein pressure that's too restricting, or a leg or spur aid that is unrelenting. Alternatively, his tack may be uncomfortable and causing him some discomfort. A swished tail that's combined with pinned-back ears warns of forthcoming



aggression, such as a kick.

A tail lifted over the back indicates enthusiasm or excitement. However, this tail-lifting behaviour is also

a way of 'inviting' the other horses to come closer to interact, exchange squeals and take part in a mutual grooming session.

Conformation concerns

Q What does it mean when a horse has sickle hocks? Is it a serious problem?

Deidre Carson answers:

Sickle hocks are a conformational fault where there is excessive angulation of the hock, so that the lower limb – from the hock to the hoof – is angled forwards under the body more than it should be. This results in the structures at the back and front of the hock joint coming under increased strain,

predisposing to injury or damage. And conditions such as bone spavin, curb, bog spavin and thoroughpin are more likely to occur. More significantly, however, is that sickle hocks can be caused by abnormal development of the bones within the hock.

Abnormalities

Prematurity or dysmaturity – where the foal is born before

its skeleton is ready for life outside the uterus – can result in damage to the developing soft bones and collapse of the normally slab-shaped hock bones, so they become wedge shaped – ie, narrower at the front. This bone shape causes abnormal joint loading and wear, resulting in arthritic change, and can predispose the bones to fracture during strenuous exercise.

Not all horses with sickle hocks have collapsed hock bones and many do remain sound in spite of their conformation. But the worse the angle of sickle hocks, the higher the risk of injury and lameness. And it seems likely that activities where the hocks are placed under increased strain – such as showjumping, higher level dressage and reining – are more likely to result in lameness in horses with sickle hocks.

There has, however, been some research on hock conformation. This has shown that the 'normal' hock angle for elite dressage horses tends to be less bent than for other groups of horses – which is the opposite of sickle hocked.

In sickle hocks, the lower limb is angled forwards under the body (left) more than it should be ideally (below)

Take note...

➤ Sickle hocks should not be confused with cow hocks, where the hocks point towards each other when viewed from behind. The lower limbs point outwards and are usually wider at ground level.

➤ In my experience, sickle hocks are more common in Quarter Horses and cow hocks in Arabians. And the two conditions can occur together.



Bloody nose bother

Q A friend of mine told me that horses are more prone to nosebleeds when the weather is warm. Is this true? My son sometimes suffers with nosebleeds when it's hot, but my horse never has. And how serious is a nosebleed in horses?

Deidre Carson answers:

I have never come across a horse with a nosebleed (epistaxis) just because the weather is hot. In the majority of cases, a nosebleed is caused by a blow to the head, which then results in a bleed from one of the sinuses. Although this is often alarming for the owner, treatment is not usually necessary unless the bleeding is severe or there is other damage, such as a skin wound or broken bone.

However, because the blood in the sinus can act as a medium for bacteria to grow, sinusitis may develop. This is inflammation of one or more of the air cavities in the bones of the skull, for which a course of antibiotics can be beneficial.

Other causes of nosebleed are potentially more serious, such as...

➤ **EIPH** (exercise-induced pulmonary haemorrhage). This is bleeding from the lungs after strenuous exercise. When the haemorrhage is excessive, blood can appear at the horse's nostrils.

➤ **GPM** (guttural pouch mycosis). Life-threatening haemorrhages can occur when a fungal infection damages the artery which lies against the guttural pouch.

➤ **Tumours** at the back of the nasal cavity, which can cause heavy nosebleeds. If bleeding is particularly heavy or recurs, contact your vet immediately.

Examination

An endoscope – examination with a flexible, fibre optic tube – can be used to confirm or rule out most of these conditions.



Treatment is not usually necessary for a nosebleed unless it's severe

Top tips

- If your horse suffers a nosebleed, don't panic. Keep him as calm as possible and put him in a stable.
- Don't try to pack your horse's nose to help stem the bleeding. A horse only breathes through his nose, not his mouth, so this would prevent him from breathing properly and could distress him.
- If the bleeding is heavy or continues for more than 15 minutes, contact your vet.

Lungeing gives an element of control



Back after box rest

Q My horse has had five months of box rest after tearing his collateral ligament, but is about to come back into work. He's a bit of a handful at the best of times, so how should I manage him?

Deidre Carson answers:

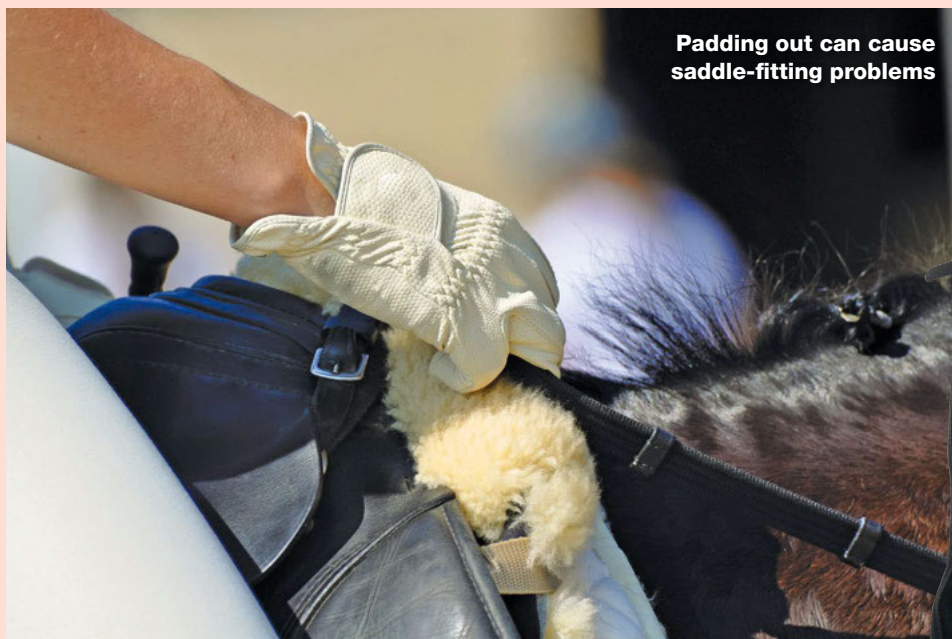
The best way to start is with hand-walking. Gradually increasing the length of time and frequency is the best way to increase loading. After some walking, introduce some lungeing in a confined space. The use of side-reins can add a little more control.

Once you have built up the time and intensity of exercise, you could consider turning him out into a cage or pen for a leg stretch. However, resist the temptation to turn him into a paddock until he's doing quite

a bit in-hand and on the lunge, as uncontrolled paddock exercise can result in re-injury.

Controlled

Ask your vet to prescribe an oral sedative, such as acetyl promazine (ACP), to take the 'edge' off your horse. If judiciously administered, it can ensure a more controlled and comfortable experience for horse and rider. I'd also involve your vet at this stage, so they can see how your boy is progressing now he's about to be exercised.



Padding out can cause saddle-fitting problems



No to a numnah?

Q I always prefer to buy my horse thick, padded numnahs because I think they're more comfortable for him. However, one of my fellow liveries has told me that I could be causing him more discomfort, because they can alter the fit of his saddle. Is this true?

Claire Williams answers:

It all depends on how thick the numnahs are. If they feature a light padding, they should be absolutely fine and are usually a great way of absorbing sweat and keeping the underside of the saddle clean. However, if a

thick numnah is used, problems might arise, including alteration of the saddle's fit – it could change the balance of a saddle and narrow the space between the horse's spine and the gullet (the deep channel on the underside of the saddle).

Therefore, if you use a numnah, care should always be taken to make sure that it is pulled right up into the gullet, because some designs tend to pull down, putting pressure on the withers. Bear in mind that you should be able to insert two fingers' width between the numnah and the horse's spine with a rider on-board.

Fit faults

If your saddle fits correctly, there really isn't any reason to use a numnah, but many riders will still use one in the mistaken belief that they will make their horse more comfortable. However, thick numnahs can actually place

the saddle – and the rider – further from the horse's back, thereby reducing stability and the close contact that we seek to achieve when riding. They can also hinder the movement of the horse's muscles, therefore preventing them from developing correctly.

Under pressure

While some riders may use a thick numnah believing it will help correct a poorly fitting saddle, chances are there will only be a temporary reduction in discomfort. This is because as the pad relocates the pressure points, new pressure points will soon develop. These are identified by the way in which sweat is distributed on the numnah.

Remember that nothing – particularly padding out a problem – is as effective and as comfortable as a great-fitting saddle.

Top tips

- Bear in mind that a horse will change shape throughout the year, depending on his weight and workload, so it is important to have your saddle checked regularly.
- When having your saddle checked, make sure you seek the help and advice of a qualified, experienced saddle fitter, because an ill-fitting saddle is a welfare issue.

Stay safe!

Q What should my high-vis tabard say on the back for hacking?

Horse&Rider answers:

First, it should be CE-approved. CE stands for Conformité Européenne (European Conformity). This indicates that it can be legally sold in the EU and has passed the tests necessary to be awarded the CE marking.

Second, it should be certified to the appropriate standard for personal protective equipment – either EN ISO 20471:2013 for professional use (those working with horses) or EN 1150 for non-professional use (leisure riders). Accessories such as hatbands and gloves should feature EN 13356.

Chaps vs gaiters

Q Can you please explain the difference between half-chaps and gaiters?

Claire Williams answers:

Half-chaps and gaiters are designed to protect the rider's legs from rubbing when a jodhpur, rather than a long riding boot is worn. The key difference between them is the material from which they are made.

Half-chaps

These are perfect for everyday wear and usually manufactured from suede, faux suede or neoprene. They are available in a wide range of colours, as well as more conventional black or brown options.

They are great for casual riding and run from the knee down to the ankle, with a zip on the outside of the calf. An elastic panel allows the half-chap to fit comfortably close to the leg, allowing good contact with the horse. Most have an elasticated strap that fits under the jodhpur boot.

Those made from synthetic fabric are easy to maintain and can be laundered at home by following the washing instructions on the label.

Gaiters

These are of a similar design to half-chaps but made from smooth leather which, when matched to the rider's boots, look extremely smart, giving the impression of long riding boots. Their zip is positioned to the back of the leg for a much neater, streamlined appearance, making gaiters a popular choice for competitions and events.

The gaiters' snug fit means they're a little more difficult to get on and off, so this is another good reason

for half-chaps being better for everyday wear.

The fact that gaiters are made from leather tends to mean they cost more than half-chaps. They can also look 'worn' more quickly as the leather softens and flexes. A suitable leather cleaner and regular elbow grease should help to keep them in good condition, but always take great care not to dry them with artificial heat if they get wet, as this could cause the leather to crack. Instead, allow them to dry naturally at room temperature.

Your high-vis tabard should be CE approved and certified to the appropriate standard

As for the wording on the back of your tabard, 'Slow down' is in keeping with The Highway Code, which advises drivers to watch for animals being led or ridden on the road. They must also drive slowly past animals and give them plenty of room. If, however, your tabard carries 'Young horse' or 'Inexperienced horse', this suggests that the horse may be spooky, unpredictable or unreliable on the road. This then questions whether or not

the horse is ready to be used for road work. Other wording that is acceptable on the back of a tabard includes 'Please pass wide and slow' and 'Horse in training, please slow down'.

Essential

Too much writing, however, could raise doubts about whether or not the safety garment complies with standards. It is essential that any wording should appear at the time of testing, rather than being added afterwards. To check this out, ask to see proof of the test certificate.

For more information, visit the British Equestrian Trade Association's website at beta-uk.org

Always wear high-vis equipment for safer hacking

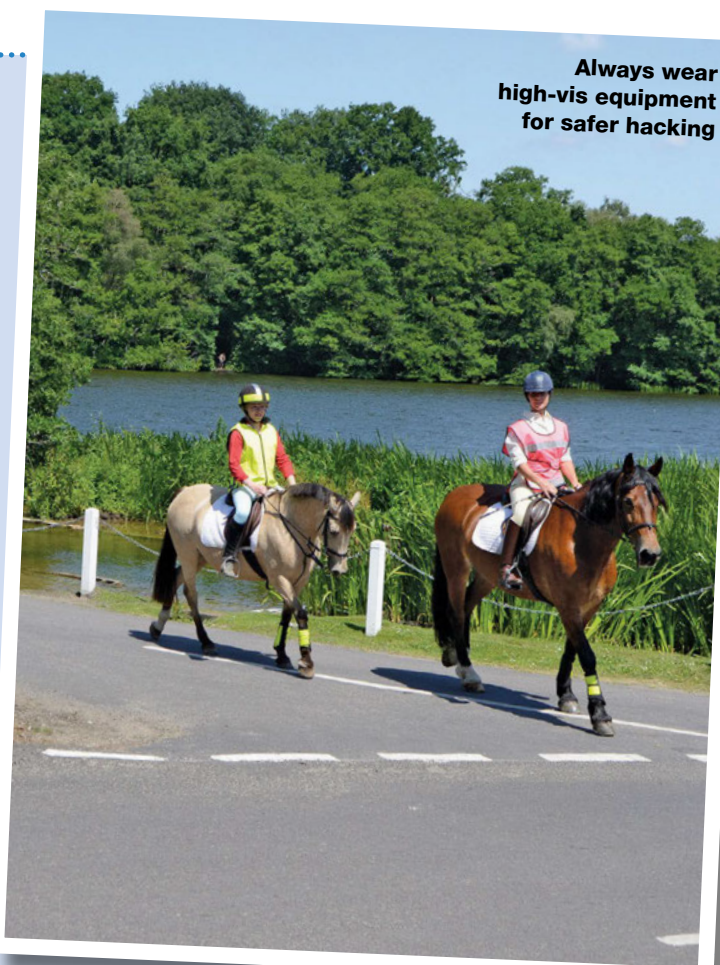


Photo: Bob Atkins

On an even keel



Q When I ride, I always have one rein about an inch shorter than the other. Why do I do it and how can I rectify it?

Minette Rice Edwards answers:

Riding with uneven reins can have a detrimental effect on both you and your horse. Most people have a slight (or pronounced) twist, with their dominant hand and shoulder (usually the right) pushed forwards. This can also be the result of compensating for an old injury or because of a repeated action during work or sport.

For instance, a violinist will probably have the left shoulder twisted forward, even though they are right handed, because of the position required for holding the violin for long periods of time. This twist will cause the reins to be uneven, because the dominant hand will be nearer to the horse's mouth, therefore making that rein looser.

So straighten your own body, and make sure your shoulders and chest are parallel to the horse's

shoulders and chest. Have some lunge lessons with an experienced instructor, so that you can learn to be more aware of sitting in the centre of your saddle with wide, relaxed shoulders, flat shoulder blades and both your upper arms falling in the vertical to heavy, fluid elbows.

Is he crooked?

Another reason for having uneven reins is because your horse is crooked. He may be 'hollow' on one rein (where his topline has become concave instead of convex) and very stiff on the other. This would cause his head to curl habitually to the hollow side, resulting in that rein being shorter.

In this case, work him correctly to help him be

equally supple on both sides. And with the aid of an experienced helper, lunge him with two lines (long-reins) in both directions, so that you can soften his neck, and help him bend to the right and left without throwing his quarters off the line of the circle.

Then when you ride, pay attention to the straightness of your body and also the length of your reins – you must have an equally soft feel and quietness in both hands. Ride accurate turns and circles with the correct bend around your inside leg, and never pull on the inside rein.

Slowly, the awareness of your horse's alignment and your position will improve, so that he ceases to move sideways like a crab and works evenly on both reins.

Top tip

► If you ride with one rein shorter than the other, a helpful exercise involves carrying a short whip or stick under your thumbs as you hold the reins with a quiet, even contact. Keep the stick parallel to the horse's shoulders, especially on turns.

Jumping quirks

Q I have introduced my five-year-old dressage horse to jumping. He has grasped the basic concepts but flicks his lead leg out on landing after small fences, which looks uncomfortable. Having said that, he copes better with bigger rather than smaller jumps. What do you suggest?

Tina Sederholm answers:

This is quite an unusual issue, although it is something I have seen other horses do over smaller fences, only for it to disappear when they jump something meatier. And some do it because they are not really paying attention to the fence. They tend to have an unfocused look on their face and don't judge their distance, and only make some sort of effort at the last moment.

This usually happens either because the horse is unsure of himself or because he is overconfident. Your horse has already made a lot of progress at a young age, so I would presume he is in the overconfident category and is a bit contemptuous of small fences.

New technique

If you watch him closely when he throws his lead leg out, I would be fairly certain that he doesn't drop his

neck or bascule properly over the fence. In other words, because he doesn't care about small fences, he doesn't try to make a good shape over them. If a horse jumps with his head high and his back tight, he throws the foreleg out as a counterbalance on landing.

Therefore, use bounce fences and grids to change his technique. A grid, even at a low height, is challenging enough to attract his interest and because of this, he will use himself properly. Another exercise you could try involves putting placing poles on the take-off and landing sides of a single fence.

If you are trotting into the fence, the take-off pole should be 2.7 metres (9ft) away and the landing pole a few inches further out at 2.85 metres (9ft 6in). You can jump these either on a straight line or on a circle, where the placing poles should be in a fan shape. This will definitely encourage

him to make a better shape, while the poles will discourage him from throwing that foreleg out.

Trial and error

Make sure also that you are not restricting him into the fence. If he is being held too tight, which might be the case if he is a sharp horse, he will be thinking too much about the rider's hands and not the jump. This will then cause him to jump with a high head carriage.

This will be a case of trial and error to solve and it is possible that despite your best efforts, he will still do it sometimes. However, as long as it is only restricted to a couple of times each jumping session, the risk of leg damage is about the same as any jumper.

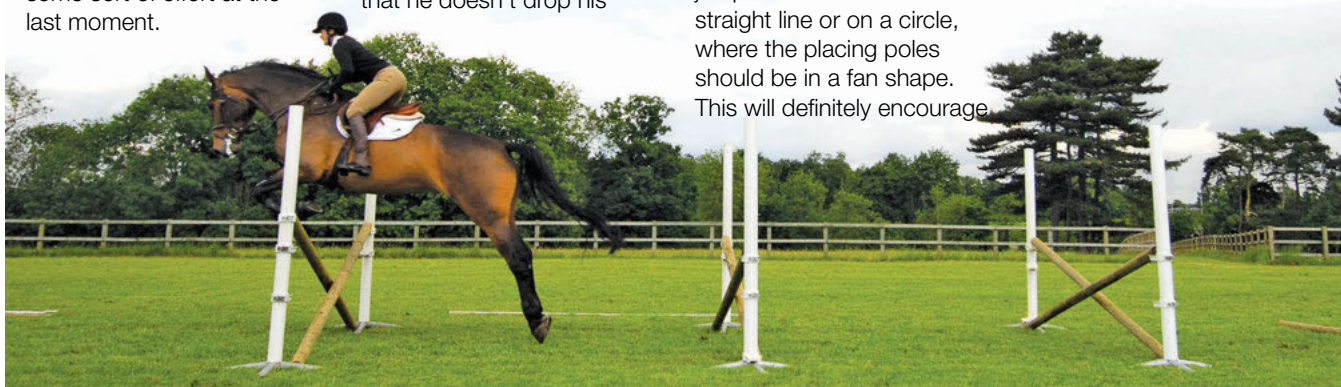


Photo: Bob Atkins

Your rein contact should be consistent but elastic



Contact issues

Q I rode my first Preliminary dressage test recently, but didn't understand what the judge meant by 'dropped the contact' on my test sheet. Can you explain?

Horse&Rider answers:

'Dropping the contact' occurs when the connection is lost from the rider's hands along the reins to the bit. This can happen when the horse goes 'behind the vertical', when he draws behind the

vertical line of his nose in relation to the ground, creating a loop in the reins. It can also happen if the horse goes 'behind the bit' – his neck may be nicely rounded, but he may not be actively taking the contact forward. Again, this will cause slack in the reins.

You should aim to develop a true connection, encouraging your horse to work over his back from engaged hindquarters through his neck and into your hands. And your contact on the reins should be consistent but elastic at all times.

Photo: Steve Bardens

Budget bedding

Q My horse is on DIY livery and I'm on a very strict budget. I'm on the look-out for some economical bedding and have heard that paper and cardboard are good. What do you think?

Jane van Lennep answers:

Both provide good bedding for horses. Bear in mind, though, that you'll need a lot of paper to make an adequate bed and it must be fully mucked out each day.

Although there are plenty of companies that supply ready-shredded bedding, you could do it yourself if you're on a budget. Old newspapers are very economical and they have a grain that makes tearing easier in one direction than the other. However, it takes time to tear, so you'll need plenty of willing helpers to lend a hand. Some offices generate a lot of shredded paper which, again, can make good bedding – and it's economical, too.



One of the best beddings is shredded cardboard – great if you have a heavy-duty shredder and access to plenty of cardboard boxes! Failing that, opened-up cardboard boxes, with any metal staples removed, can be used as a liner under other bedding. Cardboard is very absorbent and can be placed strategically where the horse stales most, and should be replaced once or twice a week.



Buckle up

Q I washed my horse's girth in the washing machine with a summer sheet that came out a big mangled. I think the girth buckles got caught up in the sheet and damaged the fabric. How can I stop this happening again?

Horse&Rider answers:

Simple – buy a girth buckle washbag! Not only will it help protect any other horse clothing you're washing with a girth, it will also protect the washing machine's drum during a cycle and prevent the buckles' noisy 'clanking' as the girth spins inside the machine.

Consisting of a neoprene bag that cushions the buckles, and an elastic drawstring cord and toggle to hold things tight, it's the answer to your washing woes!

ONLINE COACHING

Our Ask the Experts team member – Australian dressage trainer Fiona Dearing, founder of Remote Coach – is on hand to answer your questions remotely from Melbourne in sunny Oz (see her website at remote-coach.com). They'll be featured, podcast-style, on horseandrideruk.com

So if you have something you'd like sorted – perhaps you've lost your confidence or need advice – send your questions to Jane Gazzard, Ask the Experts Editor, to the address on page 65 and we'll pass them on to Fiona.

This month, an *H&R* reader asks: "I've rehomed an



ex-police horse in the USA, but think he may be a rig as he tries to get in with my mares. I'm also having trouble saddling and biting him, and he'll only walk on when I'm leading him. How should I acclimatise him to a new training routine?"

To see what Fiona advises, visit bit.ly/HR-Jan15

Mature manure

Q What can I use my horse's manure for, except my dad's roses?

Jane van Lennep answers:

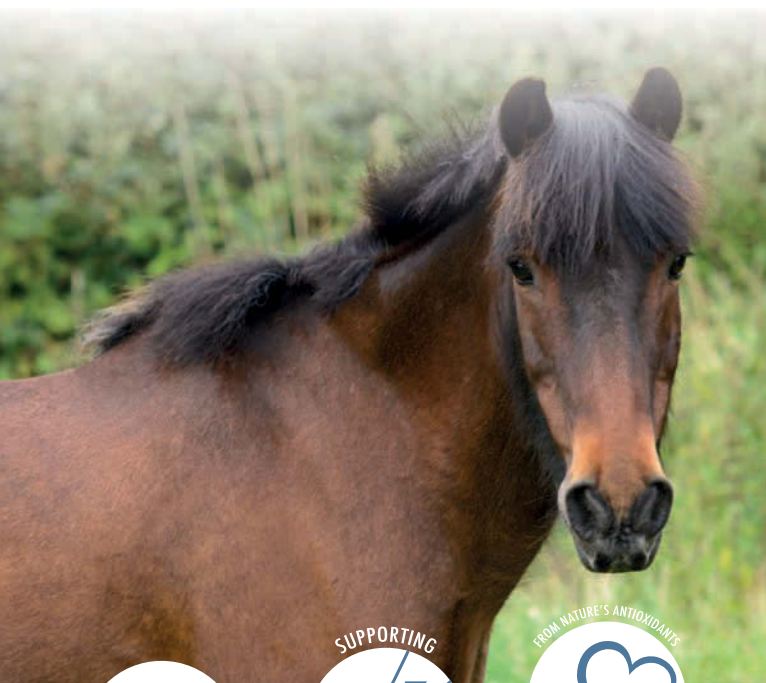
Fresh muck should not be sold or given away, as it's not that great for gardens – the ammonia will burn foliage. Instead, leave it to 'mature' and store it in well-maintained muck heaps. As it rots it reduces in volume and, after rotting down fully (the time depends on the horses' diet and bedding used), is the best fertiliser for your fields – and your dad's roses!

The organic matter also supports invertebrates, as



well as helping grass growth. And let's not forget that invertebrates are the base of a long food chain, supporting many higher animals.

Introducing CushCare Condition



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CushCare Condition is a complementary feed for underweight horses which need a diet lower in starch and sugar.

- **Essential amino acids** which are the necessary building blocks for protein and are therefore important in the nutritional support of muscle cell maintenance and generation
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- **Contains soya lecithin** to support weight maintenance, fat digestion and absorption



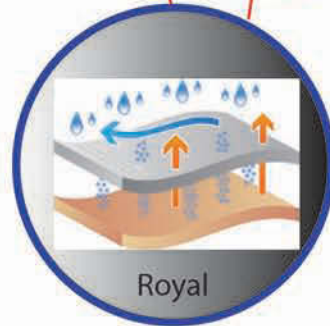
- **Added B vitamins and carnitine** also help the metabolism of fat
- **Our patented QLC package of antioxidants** (including vitamin E, vitamin C and selenium) supports the horse's immune system and 'mops up' excess free radicals that may be associated with ageing
- **Contains live Actisaf yeast and prebiotics** to promote a healthy digestive system and the normal function of the hindgut
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Growth factors

The most common equine tumour, sarcoids are the bane of owners' lives. Vet Tim Adams from the Liphook Equine Hospital has the low-down on these troublesome lumps

Discussions about sarcoids often begin with, 'There's a lump...' Horses develop many lumps and bumps on their skin, many of which resolve without treatment or investigation, but equine sarcoids are extremely common and due to their potential complications must be considered.

They are the most commonly detected skin tumour in equids (horses, donkeys, mules and zebra) and are found in horses of all types, sex and age. The name 'sarcoid' is a little misleading as human sarcoidosis and sarcoids are entirely different, and this does create confusion. Equine sarcoids are skin tumours that are locally invasive but do not spread to other organs.

What do they look like?

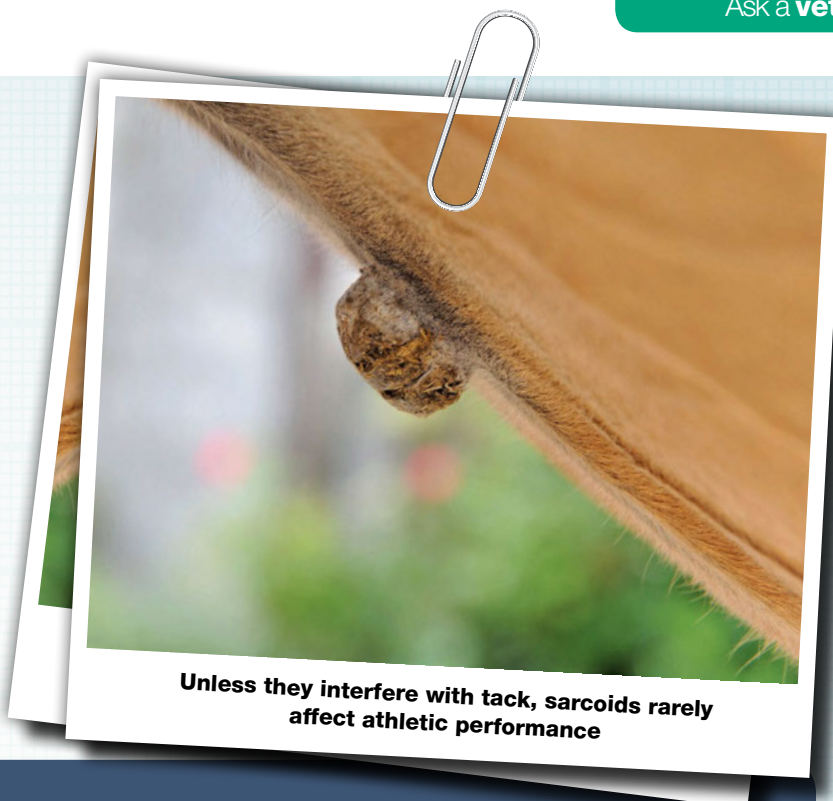
There is a range of different appearances and classifications of sarcoid, ranging from subtle

scaly lesions (which can be mistaken for other types of skin problem) to dramatic, rapidly-growing fleshy lumps. The six different types of sarcoid are shown right, although sarcoids can change in appearance and develop from one type to another.

Sarcoids tend to be found on the body in sites where flies bite, so around the groin, sheath, udder, eyes or in between the front legs. They also have a tendency to develop at the sites of wounds. It is thought that biting flies are involved in the transmission of sarcoids, but their exact cause and their potential for transmission is still unknown.

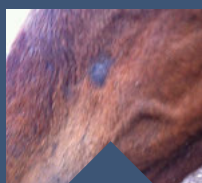
If they are transferred from one horse to another, the rate of transmission is very low and the risk of one horse picking them up from another is extremely small. It is likely that some horses are more susceptible than others.

Sarcoids tend to become more numerous in the summer months and larger in the winter months

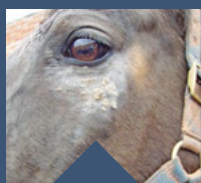


Different types

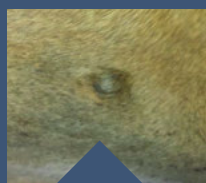
The six classifications of sarcoid are...



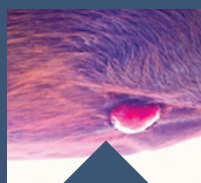
Occult These sarcoids are scabby, roughly circular areas of skin that may be slightly thickened. Understandably, these lesions are often mistaken for rug rubs, ringworm or fly bite reactions.



Verrucose The presentation of this type of sarcoid is often fairly subtle. There is usually a patch of thickened, hairless skin, with a few smaller lumps and warty areas.



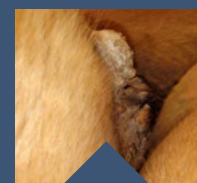
Nodular These sarcoids are more rounded and the skin over the top can feel normal or be ulcerated. The lump can vary in size enormously, from a small, lentil-sized nodule to a ping-pong ball-sized mass.



Fibroblastic These sarcoids tend to be larger and often have an ulcerated surface.



Malevolent This is the most aggressive type of sarcoid and it invades surrounding tissue, grows quickly, and may cause significant discomfort and distress to affected horses.



Mixed This classification simply covers those sarcoids that have more than one presentation in one site. It is the more commonly used term, as the majority of sarcoids have a mixed appearance.

Potential problems

Sarcoids can cause discomfort and pain to horses when they interfere with tack, are rubbed by rug straps or attract flies. And those around eyes can become large enough to impair vision and interfere with normal eyelid function.

They often become more aggressive and larger once they have been traumatised or treated unsuccessfully. There is also a tendency for them to become more numerous during the summer months and larger during the winter months, possibly due to fly irritation. A horse with sarcoids can become unrideable in the summer months when the number of flies and irritation they cause make an affected horse really miserable.

Effect on his value

Sarcoids are often identified at pre-purchase examinations. While they rarely compromise the athletic performance of the horse, they affect his appearance and can lower his resale value. The difficulties and potential expense of treating sarcoids may also put off potential purchasers.

It is possible for a horse to be suitable for the intended purpose at a pre-purchase exam with sarcoids identified. However, purchasers should be aware that they're taking on a risk, particularly if they wish to resell the horse. There are insurance implications, too, as many companies exclude problems identified at a pre-purchase exam, meaning that they won't pay out for related claims.

Cause unknown

The exact cause of sarcoids is unknown. An association of sarcoids with a bovine papillomavirus (a wart-causing virus of cattle) has been found, but in studies where horses were deliberately infected with bovine papillomavirus, sarcoids did not develop. Different horses seem to have different propensities for developing sarcoids when kept in similar environments, suggesting a genetic susceptibility.

Because it is thought that biting flies are involved, the best way to prevent your horse developing sarcoids is with good general fly control, using an effective fly repellent and fly rug.

Careful diagnosis

Diagnosis of sarcoids is usually achieved by looking at the clinical appearance and position on the horse. It is possible to confirm diagnosis with a biopsy (where a sample of tissue is collected surgically and analysed under a microscope) and the biopsy can involve taking the whole sarcoid or just part of it.

A biopsy can, however, make a sarcoid more aggressive and invasive. For this reason, some vets prefer not to attempt biopsy. Where biopsy is used to confirm a diagnosis, it is sensible to have a treatment plan ready to start at the time of biopsy.

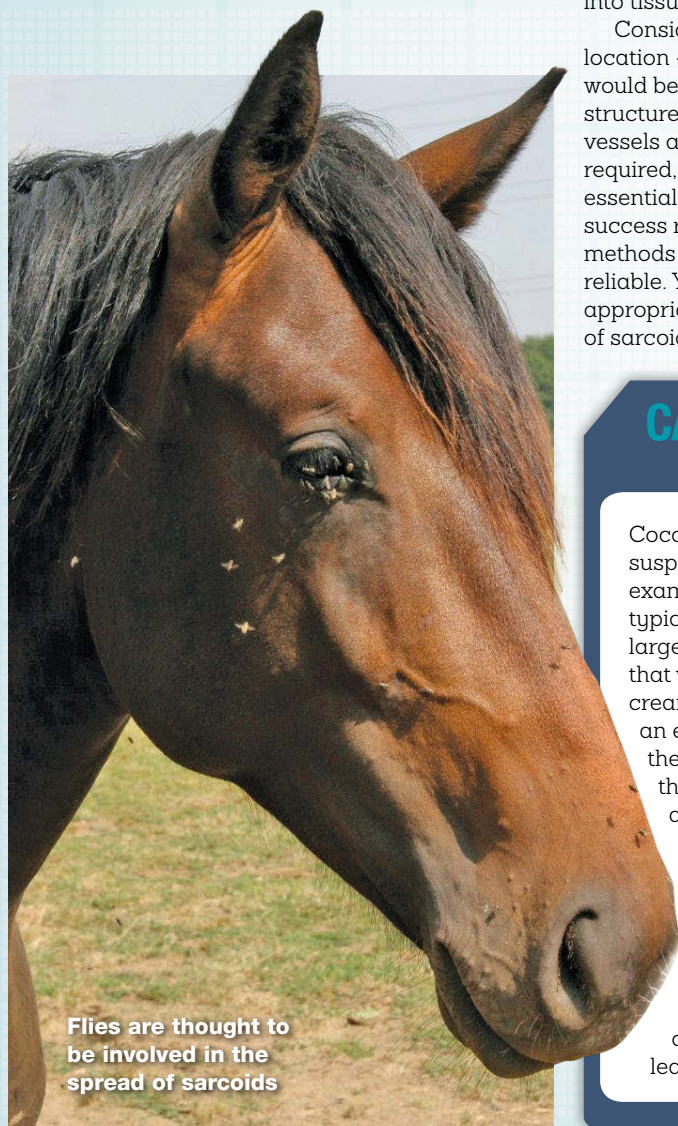
Sarcoid solutions

Sarcoids usually become larger and more aggressive over time, but the speed of progression is notoriously unpredictable. It is possible for an occult, verrucose or nodular sarcoid to remain dormant for years, and a small proportion of sarcoids spontaneously resolve without treatment. For these reasons, some horse owners prefer to monitor sarcoids rather than treat them. However, smaller, benign lesions are much easier to treat successfully than large, aggressive ones, so it can be argued the sooner you treat the better.

There is no universally effective treatment for sarcoids and myriad different options are available. Generally, the more effective treatments – such as radiation therapy or chemotherapy – are more expensive and carry greater risks, while the cheaper and safer options can be ineffective. Homemade treatments such as applying toothpaste or tying off sarcoids with thread often exacerbate them, making them harder to treat, and should be avoided.

Different types of sarcoid require different approaches. For example, new, small, flat, occult-type sarcoids often respond well to simple treatments such as cryotherapy (freezing with liquid nitrogen), whereas this treatment wouldn't penetrate deeply enough into tissues of a larger fibroblastic lesion.

Consideration must also be given to their location – for example, a caustic ointment would be dangerous around sensitive structures such as eyes. Care around blood vessels and other sensitive structures is also required, so anatomical knowledge is essential before treatment. Published success rates for different treatment methods are very variable and aren't always reliable. Your vet can advise you on the most appropriate treatment for your horse's type of sarcoid, the position and your budget.



Flies are thought to be involved in the spread of sarcoids

CASE STUDY

Coco presented with several suspicious lumps that, on examination, had the appearance and typical positions of sarcoids. The largest lesion was a nodular sarcoid that we treated with AW4-LUDES cream. Due to the size of the sarcoid, an elastic ring was placed around the main lesion in order to reduce the blood supply to the sarcoid and help the chemotherapy agent work.

After three months, the sarcoid had died off and underneath the sarcoid was healthy, pink, normal tissue, which the owner kept clean. The area then healed, contracted and closed up, leaving a relatively minimal scar.



From top to bottom, the healing process of Coco's sarcoid after treatment

The treatment options for sarcoids include...

Surgical removal This is often the simplest way of removal, but it may result in spreading of the sarcoid along the incision, so it can increase the total number of lesions, and recurrence rates of up to 50% have been reported. However, surgical removal in combination with chemotherapy, cryotherapy, thermotherapy or with a laser improves the success rates by destroying any remaining sarcoid cells. Surgery may also be useful for reducing the size of larger sarcoids before treatment to allow better penetration of topical ointments and therapies.

Cryotherapy This method can be useful for small or early lesions that are relatively flat.

Chemotherapy Various chemotherapy agents exist, some of which are used alone and some in combination with caustic agents. AW4-LUDES cream, often referred to as Liverpool Cream as it is dispensed from Liverpool University, is a mixture of cytotoxic agents (an agent that attacks rapidly-dividing cells). This cream has been used for a variety of different sarcoids and comes with advice from the University on treatment protocols.

Cisplatin is a chemotherapy agent that has had good success rates in the treatment of sarcoids. It comes as a suspension in oil or as a biodegradable bead that can be implanted into the sarcoid for slow-release treatment. However, it is carcinogenic and most vets are reluctant to use it. Mitomycin is another chemotherapy agent that is sometimes used for sarcoids.

All chemotherapy agents are dangerous substances and care must be taken with the handling and preparation of them. Therefore, they should only be used by a veterinary surgeon. They are also often very irritant so can damage tissue around the sarcoid, increasing the risk of scarring and damage to adjacent structures.

Acyclovir This is not a cytotoxic medication, but an antiviral ointment that can be used on superficial smaller sarcoids and can be applied by owners.



Blood-root ointment This is a plant extract that can be applied topically by owners. However, it has varying reports of efficacy and is only suitable for smaller, superficial sarcoids. There are many other herbal supplements and topical creams that can be used, but often these have little evidence or even logic to support their use. Herbal or homeopathic products should never be applied directly to sarcoids, as they are likely to make the sarcoid more aggressive and will make future treatment harder.

BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) treatment This has long been used for treatment of small sarcoids around the eyelids and eyes, with reported success rates of approximately 60%. It is not suitable for other types of sarcoid and can cause anaphylactic reactions in some horses, although they are rare.

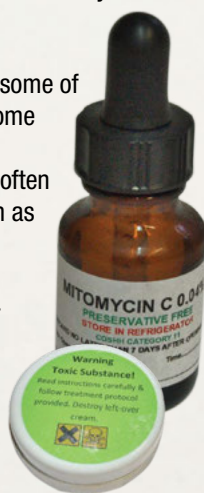
Radiotherapy This is the most effective treatment for sarcoids, particularly those around the eyes, with some studies reporting success rates of more than 90%. Generally, it involves the use of iridium wires that are implanted into the lesion. Unfortunately, there are few specialist centres where radiotherapy can be carried out, and due to the difficulties and safety implications for handlers and operators, radiotherapy is expensive.

Electrochemotherapy This is a new anti-cancer therapy that uses electrical field pulses to improve the penetration of cisplatin, a chemotherapy drug, into the sarcoid. The drawback to this technique is the expense involved and the dangers already described to clinicians and handlers from use of a chemotherapy agent.

Mistletoe extract This new treatment involves injecting mistletoe extract subcutaneously (under the skin) and good results have been seen.

No sarcoid treatment is guaranteed to be successful, and in many cases it takes several months to complete the treatment and for the lesions to heal. There may also be several weeks when the horse cannot be ridden during treatment. For this reason, many owners elect to wait until winter before commencing treatment, as there are fewer flies and most horses are ridden less frequently.

Recurrence following treatment is always a risk and even when treated successfully, there is a chance horses will develop a sarcoid at a new site.



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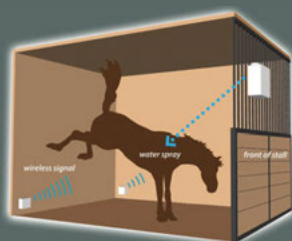
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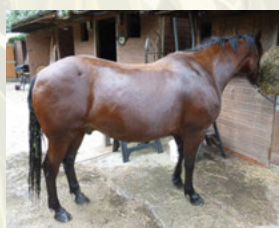
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Tales of the Unexpected

Readers tell us their true-life stories

Last-ditch attempt

*Fred was missing.
I immediately thought
the worst*



You arrive at the field in the morning, expecting to see a friendly equine face waiting by the gate for his breakfast, as usual. But he's not there. In fact, there's

no sign of him at all. For horse owners, this situation is something nightmares are made of, but for *Horse&Rider* reader Caroline Hytch, it became a horrifying reality. Caroline continues the story...

I've owned my 20-year-old horse, Freddie Star, for 19 years. He had been a great all-rounder until five years ago when some of his old injuries were starting to show up and we took the decision to retire him. Fred was prone to disasters in his younger days, being hit by a car and then coming out of a horsebox roof in a road traffic accident, both of which he recovered from with some TLC. But in his old age he'd settled down and all that drama was behind us. I thought.

Sudden disappearance

Fred lives out with two other horses. That evening, as usual, we fed them at 7pm and left them grazing happily. But the next morning, when I went to feed, only two horses came for breakfast – Fred was missing. This was extremely rare as Fred was usually the first to greet me. I immediately thought the worst. He could be lying



Fred was swimming up and down, trying to find a way out

You leave your horse safe and sound, and expect him to be there in the morning. One H&R reader explains the gut-wrenching moment she realised her horse wasn't in his field

down behind a hedge unable to move, or worse. My mind raced. I ran round the field desperately calling him and suddenly he responded with a whinny. Following the direction of his neighs, I tracked him down to the water-filled dyke along the edge of the field.

In deep water

Fred seemed unhurt, but he was shivering and calling out, while swimming up and down to try to find a way out, eating the reeds as he went. I hurried back to the house, and asked my husband to call the emergency services and the vet. Then I went back to wait with Fred, closing off the field so the other two were away from any vehicles in the field. I didn't panic, I just went on autopilot. To be honest, I was relieved to find Fred alive.

The emergency services and my vet, Chris Lehrbach, soon arrived. Fred was a bit wary of all the attention. I managed to get a headcollar on him, then left the experts to get on with pulling him out. Fred was so well-behaved and kept calm throughout, so he didn't need sedating. The emergency services did a fantastic job of getting Fred out, and he stood up on the second attempt and walked off. Chris took Fred's temperature and we were shocked at how cold he was. He was hypothermic, which suggested he'd been in the water for some time.

We gave Fred a hot bath to help warm him up, then rugged and stabled him until his temperature was normal. Once he'd had his bath, he stopped shivering and somehow he hadn't suffered any cuts or scrapes. By lunchtime, he was back to normal with no ill effects at all.

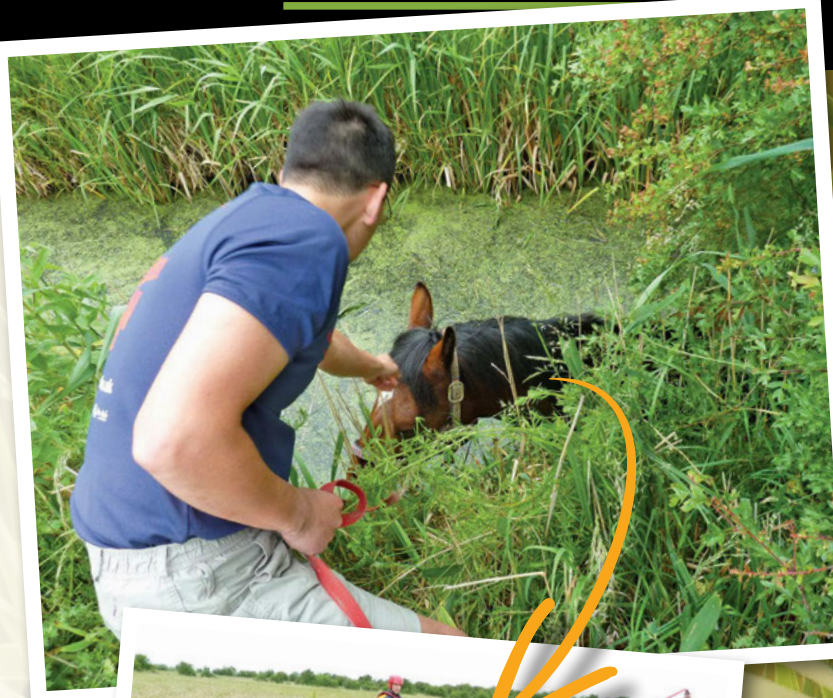
Do you have a 'Tale of the unexpected' about your horse?

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Once his headcollar was on, Caroline left the experts to it

I didn't panic, I was relieved to find him alive

Getting Fred ready to be pulled out



Tales of the Unexpected

A lesson learnt

Fred is kept in the Norfolk Broads National Park, where there is no fencing – the dykes divide up the fields. But in the 13 years we have been there, nothing like this had happened before. All the fields have water tanks for the horses to drink from, so there is no need for them to go near the water. But this summer, the grass wasn't as good as normal, so we think Fred went on a reed hunt one night along the edge of the dyke.

We're still not 100% sure where he went in, but we found some fresh prints on the bank where he had sunk into the mud. We're assuming that as he was unable to get himself back up the bank, he went into the water.

I wish I was able to fence the dyke off to prevent something like this happening again, but although we own the land, it's difficult to do it as it's in the National Park. All the horses eat the reeds, but this time Fred reached too far. He still eats them, but he only goes to the top of the bank. Hopefully he has learnt that going down the side is not a good idea!



Veterinary viewpoint

Chris Lehrbach from Brooke Equine Clinic, a member of XL Equine, attended Fred's rescue. He tells us more about it...

It is relatively common for horses to get stuck in ditches, particularly in places like Norfolk where there are lots of drainage dykes, which can be deep with steep sides and overgrown. They tend to be easy to get into, but hard to get out of. Many ditches aren't fenced off and they are often used as a water source.

Potential problems

When a horse is stuck in a ditch, the main concerns include...

- **drowning.**
- **hypothermia** – this can vary in severity, depending on time spent in the water, how deeply submerged they are and the time of year. Hypothermia isn't usually fatal, but may need treatment.
- **respiratory infections** – these can occur if muddy water is inhaled while the horse is struggling.
- **leg injuries** – these are very common, often caused by scrabbling up the bank repeatedly, or submerged wood or metal in the ditch. Wounds can vary from minor abrasions to life-threatening joint or tendon sheath penetrations.
- **fractures** – can occur as a result of trying to get out or by falling in awkwardly. Long bone fractures usually require euthanasia.
- **head/facial injuries** – can occur if the horse is thrashing around on his side for a long time.

Rescue operation

Slings are usually placed around the horse's body and limbs, then they are either pulled out manually, dragged out by a vehicle or lifted by a hoist. They can be pulled out forwards, sideways or backwards, depending on how they are positioned and what access we have to the area.

Fred was pulled out manually by the fire service, front-end first.

The plan is agreed between the fire service and the attending vet beforehand, so it's essential that both parties know what they are doing. Often the patient is sedated to allow a safer extraction, but as Fred was so sensible, we didn't end up sedating him. However, the vet will keep some sedative drawn up in a syringe ready to use in case something untoward happens – it is essential to be able to deal with the horse if he panics during or immediately following extraction. We also keep euthanasia drugs drawn up and ready to use in case it becomes necessary to euthanase the patient. Expect the unexpected and plan for it is the general motto.

Most horses are rescued safely, as these days the training of equine vets and the Fire and Rescue Service is much better, with well-organised training programmes and specialist equipment which make the job a lot safer and more effective.

When a horse gets stuck

If you find a horse in a ditch, call the Fire and Rescue Service. If it's your horse, call your vet, otherwise most Fire and Rescue Services have a list of local equine practices with suitably experienced vets who can attend. Do not get in the ditch to try to help, how ever tempting, as you will put yourself at serious risk of injury or death.

Try to keep the horse still and calm, and his head above water if necessary. Keep other animals away, unless having a field companion restrained nearby helps keep him calm, and offer some feed as a distraction. Open and clear the gateways so that the fire service and vet can get as close as necessary with vehicles. Do not try to rescue the horse yourself under any circumstances – wait for the professionals to arrive.

No one can perform on an upset stomach



If your horse shows signs of gastric stress,

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Our expert



**Laura Ruby BVSc
MRCVS**
qualified

from the University of Liverpool in 2013 and since then has been working at Calweton Veterinary Group in Cornwall, a member of XL Equine. Her principal interests are equine dermatology and ophthalmology.

Mud fever

Does it feel like a constant battle against mud fever during winter? Vet Laura Ruby from Calweton Equine, a member of XL Equine, explains how best to prevent and treat it

Mud fever is a very common skin disease affecting the lower part of horses' limbs. It is most often seen during the winter period, as cold, wet weather is a predisposing factor. Ongoing wet conditions cause the skin to soften, so damage to the skin occurs more easily. Disruption of the skin barrier allows the bacteria *Dermatophilus congolensis* in, causing mud fever. Once infection with *Dermatophilus* is established, secondary infection with other bacteria such as *Staphylococcus* spp may occur and this can exacerbate the problem.

Tell-tale signs

The heel bulbs and back of the pastern are the most commonly affected areas, although lesions can extend up the limb to the fetlock and the back

of the cannon region. Clinical signs vary depending on the stage and severity of infection, but in the initial phase, the affected area is typically covered in multiple small scabs. These scabs are sometimes tightly adhered to the skin and there may be a discharge associated with them. The skin underlying the scabs is often very inflamed and raw-looking.

The disease process can progress if infection tracks through into underlying tissue. In this instance, the limb becomes progressively swollen and oedematous (accumulation of fluid in the tissue), is often painful to touch and a low-grade lameness may be seen. Inflammation and infection involving the tissue beneath the skin is known as cellulitis.



Clean-up operation

Regular inspection of the back of your horse's pasterns is useful for early detection of lesions. If treatment is started as soon as a few small scabs appear, then resolution will be much faster than waiting until he is showing significant clinical signs before taking action.

There is some debate as to the best approach for management and treatment of mud fever cases. The controversy lies in whether or not to wash affected areas. As mentioned previously, wet, damp conditions are perfect for the bacteria to thrive. However, in the initial phase it is important to remove the scabs and bathe the underlying skin with an antiseptic solution.

The following protocol is recommended for treatment of simple cases of mud fever...



Initially, it's important to remove the scabs and bathe the underlying skin with an antiseptic solution

2



1 Remove the scabs

This is easier said than done with some horses! The scabs that form in a case of mud fever can be very tightly adhered to the underlying skin, making it challenging to remove them without objections. Soak the affected areas to soften the scabs and aid removal. Use an antibacterial shampoo in combination with warm water and soak for around 10–20 minutes – this should be sufficient in most cases. In those cases where it is still too difficult to remove the scabs, cover them with an emollient cream and leave for a few hours to soften.

2 Clean the affected area

Once the scabs have been removed, the skin should be bathed with an antibacterial solution – a chlorhexidine-based product would be appropriate. Cotton wool or something similar that is disposable should be used, not a sponge that has been used before. It is recommended to leave the shampoo on the skin for around 10 minutes to allow sufficient time for the chlorhexidine to work. This stage of treatment is important for reducing the bacterial load and preventing continued re-infection.

3 Rinse

Rinsing thoroughly is necessary to remove all the shampoo.

4 Dry thoroughly

Drying is critical. It is imperative that if the limb is washed, it is dried thoroughly afterwards, as leaving a damp environment

will aid disease progression and hinder healing. The best way to dry the limb will depend on the facilities available and the temperament of your horse. If it is safe to do so, using a hairdryer on a cool setting is very effective, although you should always be careful when using electrical equipment around horses. Alternatively, rubbing the area dry with a clean or disposable towel and applying quick-dry wraps can work.

5 Clipping

At this stage, when the legs are clean and dry, it's a good opportunity to clip the affected areas. Clipping is helpful for a number of reasons – it makes it easier to apply topical creams to the lesions, to dry the limbs, and assess the response to treatment and identify new lesions.

6 Apply appropriate antibacterial cream

There are numerous different commercial creams and ointments available for the treatment of mud fever, but it can be a minefield when trying to decide which is best to buy. It should be noted that the barrier cream used in an attempt to prevent mud fever is not an appropriate cream to use for treating active lesions.

A cream containing an appropriate antimicrobial should be applied to the lesions twice daily, and it is helpful if the cream has a thick/sticky consistency as it will stay where it is applied and not run down the foot. It is best to consult your veterinary surgeon to discuss the right cream for your horse.



The above treatment will need to be repeated daily until the area is fully healed. Initially, it is necessary to repeat washes with antibacterial shampoo as new scabs are removed, but when there are no fresh scabs present, the washing stage can be left out and the cream reapplied.

In an ideal world, all cases of mud fever would resolve following the above protocol, but things don't always go to plan! In ongoing cases that are not resolving and in cases where further complications occur, a visit from your veterinary surgeon will be required.

Potential complications

The most common reason for cases not resolving is inappropriate treatment or insufficient duration of treatment. However, there are occasions where underlying disease may be suspected and in these circumstances, your vet may need to investigate further. An example of this would be a horse with lesions restricted only to areas of pink skin, in which case a blood sample may be taken to check for evidence of liver disease.

As mentioned earlier, cellulitis can occur if infection tracks through into underlying tissue. The affected legs will be swollen and, when felt, your finger will sink into the swelling and leave an indent. This is known as pitting oedema. The swelling is uncomfortable for the horse, so lameness or a stiff gait is often seen. Topical treatment will be unable to penetrate through the full thickness of the skin to the subcutaneous tissue, so systemic treatment is required. Your vet will prescribe antibiotics in either an oral or injectable form, and anti-inflammatory medication is also used to help reduce swelling and provide pain relief.



If the infection gets into the tissues beneath the skin, a condition called cellulitis can occur



Protect and prevent

As the old saying goes, prevention is better than cure, so how do you avoid cases of mud fever? There are numerous different ways to minimise the chance of this condition developing, but key to all approaches is keeping the legs as dry as possible. Despite everyone's best efforts, fields get poached in winter, and horses inevitably end up standing in mud and walking along muddy tracks. Rotation of paddocks and using electric fencing to section off muddy areas of the field can be helpful, but given the climate we live in, it would be a miracle to come through the winter without having experienced any mud!

It can be very tempting to wash the mud off your horse's legs every time you bring him in, but over-washing softens the skin barrier, making damage more likely, and each time you wash, you are

The key to preventing mud fever is keeping the legs dry



The development of mud fever is sometimes inevitable, but prompt treatment will help you keep on top of it



re-establishing the damp environment that the bacteria thrive in. If you have to wash your horse's legs, it is imperative they are dried thoroughly afterwards. It is recommended that you leave any mud to dry naturally on the leg, then brush it off once it is dry. Applying leg wraps to muddy limbs can help wick away moisture and warm up the limbs, then the mud can be brushed off once it's dry.

Before turnout, consider applying a topical barrier cream to the back of the pastern and heel bulbs. A suitable barrier cream should have a thick consistency and an oily base to provide a water-resistant barrier. Sudocrem is very effective, as are many of the barrier cream products available in your local tack shop.

Waterproof leg wraps are an alternative to barrier cream. These will cover the lower half of the limb, providing protection to the cannon region as well as the pastern and heel. If using leg wraps, ensure that they are regularly removed and the limb checked for any sores before replacing.



Protect legs with barrier cream

Avoid home remedies

As with all conditions, there are many old wives' tales and home remedies for treating mud fever, most of which should be avoided. Athlete's foot spray is a common one, but mud fever is a bacterial condition, so this type of spray – which is intended for fungal infections – will not treat the problem.

Nizerol shampoo is another anti-fungal product that is not an appropriate treatment. In cases where there is a secondary fungal infection, these treatments may be of some use, but for simple cases of mud fever they can, in some instances, make the condition worse. Never try anything without consulting your vet first.

Stop it in its tracks

Mud fever is a condition that will always plague some horses. That said, early detection and prompt treatment should make it self-limiting and allow you to continue your normal activities throughout the winter period.

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Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Golden oldies

Our population of veteran horses is ever increasing, but it's impossible to treat them all individually in terms of their nutritional requirements. Joanna Palmer, Equine Nutritionist at Allen & Page, explains how best to feed your ageing horse





Our expert



Joanna Palmer is Equine Nutritionist for Allen & Page Quality Horse Feeds and has a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture with Animal Science from Harper Adams Agricultural College. Joanna's experience helps guide owners on feeds and feeding, including the nutritional and practical aspects of horse keeping.

Typical signs of ageing...



➤ A decrease in energy levels.



➤ A change in body shape, loss of weight and condition.



➤ Stiffening of the joints.



➤ A decline in dental condition that affects the horse's ability to chew and subsequently digest food efficiently.

Continued advances in veterinary medicine, together with an increase in our own understanding and management of our horses, have led to a significant increase in their lifespans. Many horses now remain healthy and active well into their twenties and thirties, but the age at which a horse officially becomes a veteran is a cause of much debate. A typical veteran showing class will be open to all horses over the age of 15, yet many are only coming into their prime at this age and are nowhere near close to slowing down.

Feeling their age?

Many owners feel the need to treat their horse as a veteran simply because they have entered

their late teenage years. However, it is important to only feed according to the horse's needs, regardless of his age. Ponies, in particular, tend to age much slower than their horse counterparts, and the horse or pony's previous life and workload will also affect when he starts to feel, act and look his age.

It is, therefore, essential that every owner really gets to know their horse. How they normally look, eat and behave are all perfect indicators of health and wellbeing, with any deviation from normal indicating that a change in diet and/or management may be necessary for your horse.

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Body conditioning

Providing illness or unsoundness aren't a problem, keeping horses fit and active in their later years is beneficial for all-round health. Weight loss can be a problem in the older horse, particularly in winter and for those in regular work. The need for calories to fuel this work, to keep warm and to maintain body condition may necessitate a change to a higher energy feed.

Most specific veteran feeds will have a digestible energy (DE) of around 11MJ/kg, which provides a step up in calories from most standard mixes and cubes. Horses who have required a high-calorie conditioning diet (DE of 12MJ/kg) throughout their life in order to maintain weight and condition will almost certainly need to remain on a similar diet in their later years to prevent weight loss.

Not all old horses lose weight. Some will remain good-doers for their entire lives and this is where switching to a specific veteran feed may not be beneficial. Keeping a good-doer at an ideal weight and body condition score is essential to avoid placing additional strains on the horse's body. Continuing to feed a low-calorie feed that provides all the vitamins and minerals needed for a balanced diet is often the most appropriate diet for retired horses and ponies showing no signs of unwanted weight loss.

Keeping an older horse active is beneficial to his wellbeing



Digestive efficiency

It is well recognised that as horses age, the efficiency of their digestive systems declines and the absorption of nutrients into the bloodstream is reduced. This means that a more nutrient-dense feed is often required to ensure the veteran horse is receiving a balanced diet. A horse's ability to digest protein declines with age and it is, therefore, essential that older horses are fed a diet that contains sufficient protein in the correct balance of amino acids. A specific veteran feed will include quality protein sources, such as soya beans, to fulfil the horse's dietary requirements.

A good veteran feed is one that is high in fibre and low in starch and sugar, as this is more natural for the horse. Feeds that contain a high proportion of cereals should be avoided as they will have significantly higher starch contents than those that use fibre and oil as energy sources. Not only can a high-starch diet cause fizzy and excitable behaviour, but it is also more difficult for the horse to digest.

As horses age, they produce less of the starch-digesting enzyme which means that starch is able to enter the hindgut. Microbial fermentation in the hindgut of starch creates an acidic environment which is undesirable and can make the horse more susceptible to developing laminitis or colic. A diet that is low in starch and sugar is also essential for any horse or pony with a history of laminitis or Cushing's disease, which is more common in older horses.

Dentition awareness



One of the most important qualities of a feed for veterans is that it is easy to eat. A veteran horse with poor teeth is more at risk of developing choke and colic, simply because he is not able to chew properly. A veteran feed soaked to form a soft, palatable mash is often relished by even the fussiest of feeders, regardless of the number of teeth they have!

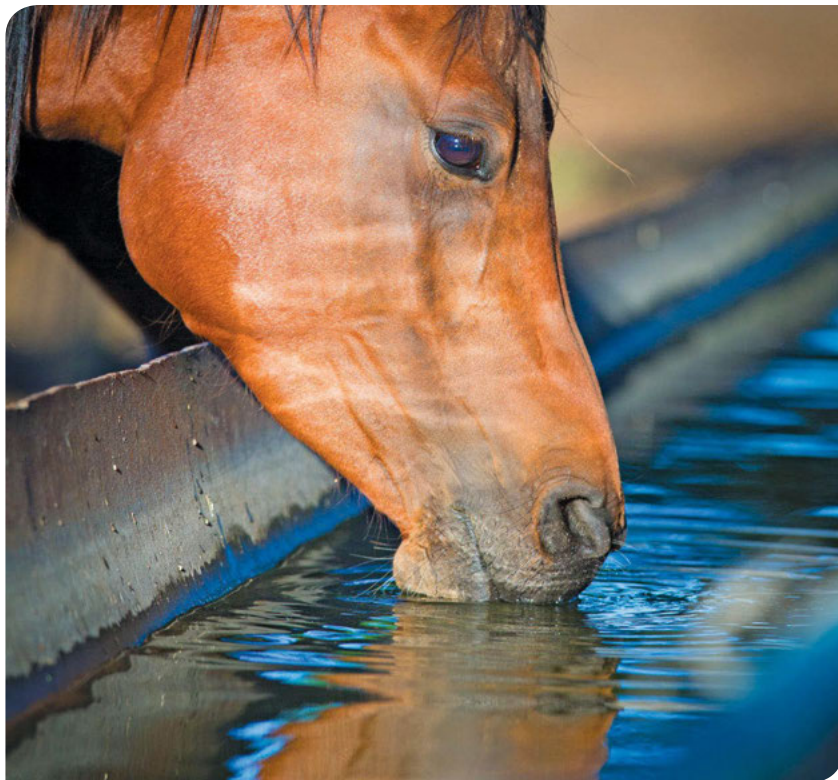
Essential oils

A diet that provides essential fatty acids, such as omega-3 and omega-6 oils, is vital for all horses, but veterans in particular can benefit from the anti-inflammatory properties of omega-3 as an aid to joint mobility. Linseed, also known as flaxseed, is a good source of omega-3 oils and is often included in veteran feeds for this reason. Pre- and probiotics can improve the health and function of the digestive system, and their inclusion in veteran feeds helps older horses gain the maximum available nutrition from their diet.



Did you know?

Linseed has a whole host of human health benefits, including helping to reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure.



Fundamental fibre

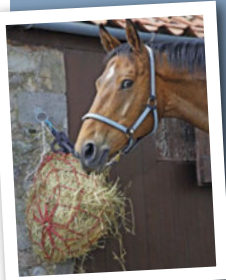
Aside from water, fibre is the most important component of every horse's diet and in the wild, they would graze for 18–20 hours a day. To mimic their need to 'trickle feed', our domesticated horses should have fibre in the form of grass, hay or haylage available at all times. Fibre is not only essential for good digestive health – its digestion also provides a good source of calories and body heat as it is fermented in the hindgut. This means that the horse has to use fewer calories to keep warm and is more likely to maintain condition. If a horse is not receiving enough fibre in his diet, he will lose weight, almost in spite of how much high-calorie hard feed he may also be given.

Unfortunately, even with the best possible care and regular attention from a qualified equine dental technician, there is little we can do to prevent the deterioration in dental condition that occurs naturally with age. Loose, worn or missing teeth and pain from sore gums will affect a horse's ability to chew efficiently, and it can then be necessary to provide alternative sources of fibre that can be easily chewed and digested.

The availability of these hay replacers has grown significantly over the last few years and includes short-chopped chaffs, sugar beet, grass nuts, alfalfa pellets and specially-prepared, fast-soaking fibre feeds that combine all the necessary ingredients and vitamins and minerals to provide a balanced diet. A hay replacer should provide similar nutrition to that of good-quality hay, but in a form that is easier to eat.

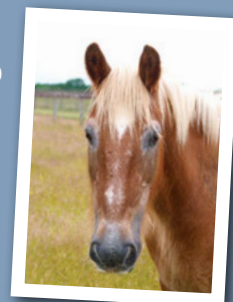
For this reason, a fast-soaking fibre feed is popular with horses and their owners alike, not only for ease of eating and preparation, but with the benefit of increasing water consumption. Veteran horses can be reluctant to drink enough water, particularly in the winter, so by feeding a soaked hay replacer, their water intake can be significantly increased. This keeps the digestive system hydrated and able to function efficiently.

Continual assessment



With the large veteran age bracket, a horse who lives into his thirties could spend more than half his life classed as a veteran, but it is inevitable his nutritional needs will change during this time. A horse showing little decline in dental condition by 20 will almost certainly do so by the age of 30. Continually assess your horse's needs, especially his ability to graze and eat hay properly, as a diet that suits him well this winter may not meet his nutritional needs in the years to come.

Many aged horses will thrive on good-quality fibre sources and a complementary veteran feed that is specifically designed to meet the nutritional needs of the older horse. This gives you the peace of mind that you are providing your horse with everything he needs. However, for others suffering from specific problems such as arthritis, providing a joint supplement can improve their quality of life. There is a huge array aimed at the needs of veteran horses, but many owners are confused as to which are necessary for their horse. There is no right or wrong choice, and it comes down to entirely personal preference and the individual horse.



Water is the most important component of a horse's diet, but veterans can be reluctant to drink enough, especially during the winter, so give them a soaked fibre feed

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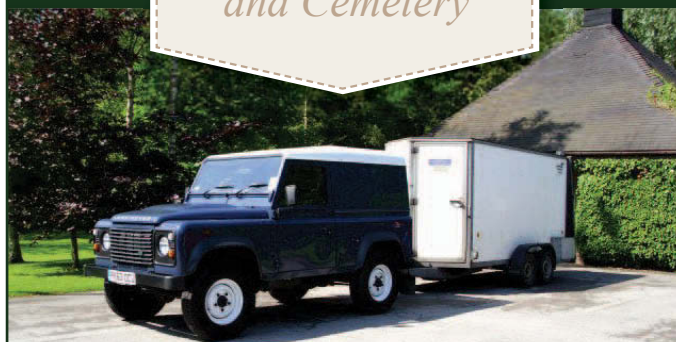
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Wellbeing

Tips

for winter travellers

Don't hang up your horse's travel boots just yet. With careful preparation, you can continue to enjoy days out through the winter, too

Horsey social events and shows tend to slow down over the winter months, but they don't completely stop. And if you're into hunting or hunter trials, the season is just getting started. But even if competitions and hunting aren't your thing, sometimes just boxing up to try out a new hacking route can really lift those winter blues.

Transporting horses in winter involves a little more preparation than the rest of the year. However, as long as your vehicle is well-maintained, you're prepared for any problems that might crop up and you drive with extra care, there's not much to stop you getting out and about safely.



Words: Lucy Turner

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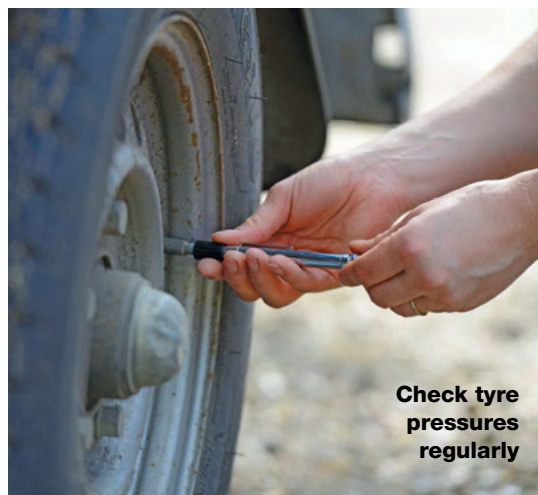
The key to driving in winter is to take it slowly and allow a double space between yourself and the vehicle in front

Check the tyre walls for signs of perishing



Vehicle maintenance

Maintaining your horsebox or trailer is even more important in the winter, as they are more susceptible to damage and problems when the weather turns cold and wet. To make sure your horse's transport is in tip-top condition...



Check tyre pressures regularly

- ensure you have breakdown cover.
- have your lorry or trailer serviced.
- if you have a hydraulic braking system, get it checked over, as it is particularly susceptible to damage in cold weather. And if it fails, you could find yourself without brakes.
- cover the trailer hitch when you aren't using it to protect it from ice and snow.
- invest in good-quality tyres.
- check your tyre pressures regularly, because tyre pressure drops when it's cold.
- ensure the tyres have adequate tread.
- check the tyre walls for perishing, especially if your horsebox or trailer has been left standing.
- test your battery to check it has plenty of life.
- check your windscreen wipers and screenwash level.
- check the lights are all working (ask a friend to stand in front and behind while you test each one).
- ensure your petrol tank is never less than half full. This is because moisture in the air in the tank can cause condensation, which can freeze in the petrol line. Plus, if you get stranded, you can keep the engine running to keep you warm.

Creature comforts

It's tempting to wrap your horse up well for his journey and to close the windows to keep out cold draughts, especially in low temperatures, but this is the worst thing you can do for a travelling horse.

What rugs you put on your horse will very much depend on the individual and whether or not he has a tendency to sweat when he travels, but most horses tend to get quite warm in the horsebox or trailer. Remember that although it's cold outside, in the trailer or lorry he is protected from the elements and his body heat will raise the temperature inside it, particularly if there is more than one horse in there. If he gets too warm and sweats, he'll become damp and could catch a chill.

When transporting horses, maintaining air quality is vital. As they are tied up, they are unable to lower their heads to clear their airways of any dust or hay particles. Leaving the windows open, no matter how cold it is, will keep a good flow of fresh air going through the trailer or horsebox. Closed windows create condensation inside the box or trailer and if horses breathe in too much moisture, it can cause respiratory problems.



What to take with you

Transporting horses in winter requires a little more preparation. Give some thought to the problems you may encounter while you're out and about, and pack any items you might need in these situations. Here are a few ideas of things to take to get you started...

- ✓ A bridle for extra control, in case you need to unload your horse somewhere unsafe, such as the side of the road.
- ✓ A power pack for jump-starting the engine.
- ✓ A fully-charged mobile phone.
- ✓ Blankets.
- ✓ Water.
- ✓ Food.
- ✓ A flask containing a hot drink.
- ✓ A windscreen scraper/de-icer.
- ✓ Extra hay and water for your horse.
- ✓ A warning triangle.
- ✓ Extra coats.
- ✓ Extra rugs.
- ✓ A shovel.
- ✓ A torch and spare batteries.
- ✓ A bag of sand/grit.
- ✓ Hessian sacks to put under the wheels to help you gain traction should you become stuck in mud or snow.
- ✓ High-vis jacket.

Make sure you have everything you might need in an emergency



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Safe driving techniques

The key to staying safe while driving in winter is to take it slowly and allow double the space between yourself and the vehicle in front, whatever the conditions. This will help you maintain control of the vehicle and give you plenty of room to stop in a controlled fashion, should you need to. Always have your headlights on for extra visibility, even when it's light.

Plan long trips carefully and try to travel during daylight hours. If possible, travel with a friend in case you need an extra pair of hands, and so that you're not alone if you get stranded. It's a good idea to check the weather forecast before you leave, especially if you're travelling some distance, so you're aware of any bad weather that could be coming in. And allow plenty of time to get to your destination, rather than rushing and risking making a mistake.



When it's icy, keep your speed slow and avoid making any abrupt manoeuvres – accelerate and brake as smoothly as you can. It doesn't need to be below freezing for the roads to be icy – expect ice when it's 6°C or lower. Remember, too, that black ice might not be visible. Keep a close eye on the drivers in front of you, as they'll give you extra warning if road conditions have deteriorated up ahead.



When it's wet, remember that the roads are most slippery when it first rains. This is because of the oil and rubber residue build-up on the road, but once it has been washed away by the rain, road conditions will improve. Look well ahead to spot flooded areas in advance and don't drive through them unless you are sure of their depth, to avoid damaging the engine. If you do drive through water, aim for the highest part of the road, drive through the water slowly and steadily, and avoid stopping in it. Gently test your brakes after going through to make sure they are working properly.

Keep your speed down, because if you drive too fast in wet conditions, your tyres could lose contact with the road, causing you to aquaplane. If this happens, don't brake, just ease off the accelerator until you regain control.



When it's windy, try to avoid routes that take you along exposed or high roads. Keep it slow to limit how far you might be blown off course if you're caught by a big gust of wind, and keep an eye out for areas on the road, such as a break in the trees or buildings, where you might suddenly be exposed to gusts of wind. Watch out for fallen trees and debris, too.



When it's foggy, travel at a speed that allows you to stop safely within your range of vision. Turn on your fog lights if necessary to help you see better and be seen by other drivers. If your visibility is reduced at a junction, wind down your window so you can hear traffic coming.



When it's muddy, pull away slowly, and keep moving slowly and steadily. If the wheels start to lose traction, ease off the accelerator. If you get stuck in mud, make

sure your front wheels point straight ahead and avoid wheel spinning. Place material with some friction under the wheels to help them grip and get you going again.



When it's snowing, it's best not to venture out unless it's an emergency situation. If transporting your horse is essential, keep it slow and avoid sudden manoeuvres. Remember that snow will obscure road markings and signs, so take extra care when approaching what could be a junction. If you become stuck in deep snow, alternate between moving forward in as high a gear as possible and reverse, until you are able to get moving again. Wheel spinning in a low gear will dig you deeper into the snow.

Try to travel during daylight hours



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Wellbeing news

{ NEWS SPECIAL }

Reduce the risk of colic

Colic is something all horse owners dread, but some horses seem more prone to it than others. Researchers at the University of Liverpool recently conducted a study to see whether or not they could identify the risk factors for recurrent colic.

They discovered that **horses who suffered with recurrent colic had fewer episodes when they spent more time out at grass**. They also found that stereotypies, such as cribbing, windsucking and weaving, increased the risk of bouts of colic, and that feeding fruit and vegetables to horses with stereotypies might reduce this risk, although more research is required to confirm this link.

While increased time at grass definitely reduces the risk of recurrent colic, more



turnout isn't suitable for all horses – for example, those with laminitis – so discuss this with your vet if you're unsure. Changes to your horse's routine should be made gradually over two to three weeks.

{ RESEARCH }

All horse owners required!

Laminitis is a complex, devastating disease that affects thousands of horses and ponies every year. **More than 3,000 horse and pony owners are needed to take part in a four-year study called CARE**

(Creating Awareness and Reporting Evidence) about laminitis. This project is being conducted by the Animal Health Trust, in partnership with the Royal



Veterinary College, and is being funded by World Horse Welfare.

The study will take a close look at management factors that may contribute to the development and recurrence of laminitis. The researchers want to involve as many owners as possible, regardless of whether or not their animals have a history of laminitis, so they can compare the two groups. If you're interested in taking part, register at careaboutlaminitis.org.uk

{ NEW TREATMENT }

New tumour treatment

Melanomas are tumours that plague grey horses, 80% of whom will develop them by the time they are 15 years old. Treatment options are limited and many aren't curative, so researchers are looking at developing vaccines that could treat affected horses. **A new vaccine, called ImmuneFX, has been tested recently** in three horses with melanomas and the results have been positive.

This new vaccine primes and educates the immune system to attack tumour cells without damaging healthy cells. Six months after vaccination started, one of the horses showed a 40% reduction in tumour burden in lesions that were injected directly with the vaccine. In the same horse, the tumours that weren't directly injected reduced by 48%. A field study lasting a year will be conducted to test the vaccine further.



Tip of the Month

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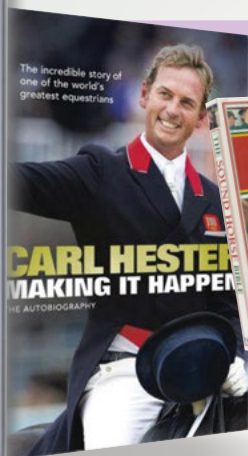
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Top 10 essentials

Ten items you should keep at hand in the tackroom



This month we love...

Tweedy animals and lots more!



What's in store?

The cosiest new products to hit tack shops this month



It can be hard to know what to get a horsey friend or livery yard owner who seems to have everything. A handmade gift can be just the thing to treat anyone on your list. What's more, it can be fun to get crafty making these gift ideas and get you into the Christmas spirit, too.



A jar of chocolate chip cookies

Chocolate chip cookies are a firm favourite and who could resist the beautiful presentation of this one-bowl recipe? Simply layer the dry ingredients into a jar and voila! All the recipient will have to do is add butter and eggs before baking them in the oven.



- 160g flour
- 146g brown sugar
- 67g caster sugar
- ½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- About 100g chocolate chips, to fill the top of the jar

You'll need to label your jar with the extra ingredients that must be added to make cookies, as well as the baking instructions. These are...

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 large egg, at room temperature
 - 115g unsalted butter, softened
- Empty contents of the jar into a large bowl and mix in the butter and egg. Spoon onto a non-stick baking sheet and bake at 180°C for 10–15 minutes.

Horse treats – two ways

Treat your horse or his friends on the yard with these delicious recipes.



No-bake nicker balls

- 85g rolled porridge oats
- 250ml water
- 1-2 teaspoons molasses or honey

Method:

Mix the oats and the water until they are damp, then add the molasses or honey until the mixture is sticky. Roll into balls and refrigerate to harden.



Carrot canter snacks

- 1 carrot, grated
- 85g porridge oats
- 4 tablespoons of honey or molasses
- 2 tablespoons water

Method:

Combine all the ingredients together. Roll into balls and bake at 180°C for about 25 minutes, until golden brown.



Custom horseshoes

These are a great idea for Christmas or as a wedding gift. There are loads of ways to decorate a special horse's shoes, with paint or sweet flowers. Spray-paint the horseshoe with gold enamel paint or add a coat of clear lacquer for a bit of shine. Don't worry if the shoes have been used, because they'll remind the recipient of all the great times spent in the saddle with their favourite horse. Add a bit of ribbon or string for hanging.





Horse cookies

Make a herd of lovely, yummy horses with this simple cookie recipe and a horse-shaped cookie cutter. Decorate with some white icing and glittery candy topping.

- 100g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 100g caster sugar
- 1 medium egg, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 275g plain flour



Method:

- Preheat the oven to 190°C and line a baking sheet with greaseproof paper.
- Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until combined, then beat in the egg and vanilla extract, a little at a time, until well-mixed.
- Stir in the flour until the mixture comes together as a dough. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface to a thickness of 1cm/½in.
- Using your horse-shaped cookie cutter, cut cookies out of the dough and carefully place them onto the baking sheet.
- Bake the cookies for 8–10 minutes, or until pale golden in colour. Remove them from the oven and leave them to harden for five minutes. Place on a wire rack, then decorate when fully cooled.



Horsey treat jars

Treats or chocolate chip cookie mix look extra-special in these beautiful jars. All you need is a small plastic horse model, a jar, a bit of superglue and some spray paint. Glue the horse to the lid. Spray-paint the horse your desired colour and let dry. Add a bit of blackboard paint to the front of the jar for a personalised label that can be reused.





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Equine DRY-CLEANING

Fed up with your horse looking like a yeti or want to spruce him up for a special occasion? We have some great tips to return him to his former glory – no bathing required!



With winter comes copious amounts of mud and hair – not the greatest look for those winter shows and events! And to make things more tricky, cold temperatures normally mean bathing is off the menu, unless you're lucky enough to have the luxury of a hot-water horse shower and solarium to dry him under. But a little elbow grease, a few neat tricks and some specially-designed products can work wonders.



Brush him up

While there are many quick-fix products on the market, there really is no substitute for a thorough groom. It'll get your horse's coat clean right down to the skin, distribute the oils that will give him a great shine and create a fantastic canvas to apply the touches that will make real difference to his appearance. Think of it as applying a primer before your make-up.

First, go over your horse's body using a rubber curry comb in circular motions to loosen mud, dead skin and loose hair, avoiding the face and lower legs. Then using a long-bristled, flick-type brush, go over the body again, including the legs, using it to flick the dirt and hair out of the coat.

Finally, use a soft body brush over the entire body to remove any remaining dust and polish the coat. Don't forget to clean your body brush with a metal curry comb every few strokes, otherwise you'll spread dirt around his body, not remove it.



Steam cleaning

Hot clothing is a great winter grooming technique and can be used instead of or after grooming for an extra-deep clean. It works best on clipped areas where you can get down to the skin, helping to remove dirt and grease from the coat, and cleanse and soothe the skin. But it can also be useful on unclipped horses to help freshen up the coat, and remove stains and sweat marks.

The key to hot clothing is to use water as hot as your hand can bear and to wring the cloth out well to prevent your horse getting too wet. Various things can be added to the water to enhance the hot clothing, such as vinegar or baby oil to add shine, and lavender wash to soothe the skin.

Fill a bucket with hot water, add any extras to it and dip in a cloth or flannel. Wring out the cloth as best you can then firmly rub the coat with it, rinsing the cloth regularly. Cover whichever half of your horse you're not working on with a rug to keep him warm. Once he's dry, give him a quick going-over with a body brush.

The finishing touches

Mane and tail

For a light mane and tail

Sometimes there is nothing for it but to get the shampoo out. But if the weather's cold, only wash up to the bottom of your horse's dock. After washing the tail, apply a stain-removing product to whiten it and tackle stains at the top of the tail that you were unable to wash. You can also use it for stains on his mane. Once the tail is dry, apply mane and tail conditioner to help repel dirt and make it tangle-free.

For a dark mane and tail

For dark tails, cleaning the bottom of the tail isn't such an issue, unless it is caked in mud or poo. In most circumstances, a good dose of mane and tail conditioner will make it tangle-free and glossy. It's the scurf at the

roots of the mane and tail that can cause a problem in winter, especially when they're plaited. To get rid of the grey look, spray on black make-up spray, but if you don't have any to hand, hairspray does a good job, too.



Legs

For a light coat Spot-wash dirty and stained areas with a damp sponge and a tiny amount of shampoo if necessary. Towel-dry the legs, then apply stain-removing spray to stubborn stains. Once the legs are completely dry, apply talc or chalk to make the legs look gleaming white.

For a dark coat Spot-wash areas with a damp sponge where there's ingrained dirt, such as the joints. When the legs are dry, rub a tiny amount of baby oil on your hands, then run your hands over the joints to make them look glossy.

Head

For a light coat A hot, damp cloth is useful for getting the head clean (see 'Steam cleaning') and in the case of stubborn stains, good old stain removers will do the trick.

For a dark coat Again, a hot cloth will freshen up the coat and remove dust. Then you could apply a tiny amount of baby oil to make his head look glossy, and use talc to brighten white face markings.

Top tips

Body

➤ **Light coat** Remove stains as soon as you see them, as they will come out easier. If you let them become ingrained, your horse will have that yellowy-green hue, even after cleaning!

➤ **Dark coat** Once you've groomed your horse's coat to perfection, there are rugs available that are specially designed to remove dust from the coat and encourage shine. They tend to be lightweight, sheet-style rugs and can be used underneath your horse's normal rugs.

Legs

➤ If you have an opportunity to wash your horse's legs, once they are dry, apply a coat shine spray or mane and tail conditioner to them. It'll help prevent the mud from sticking, keeping them cleaner for longer.

Head

➤ Baby wipes are great for last-minute touch-ups at shows, to clean up runny or dirty noses and gunky eyes.

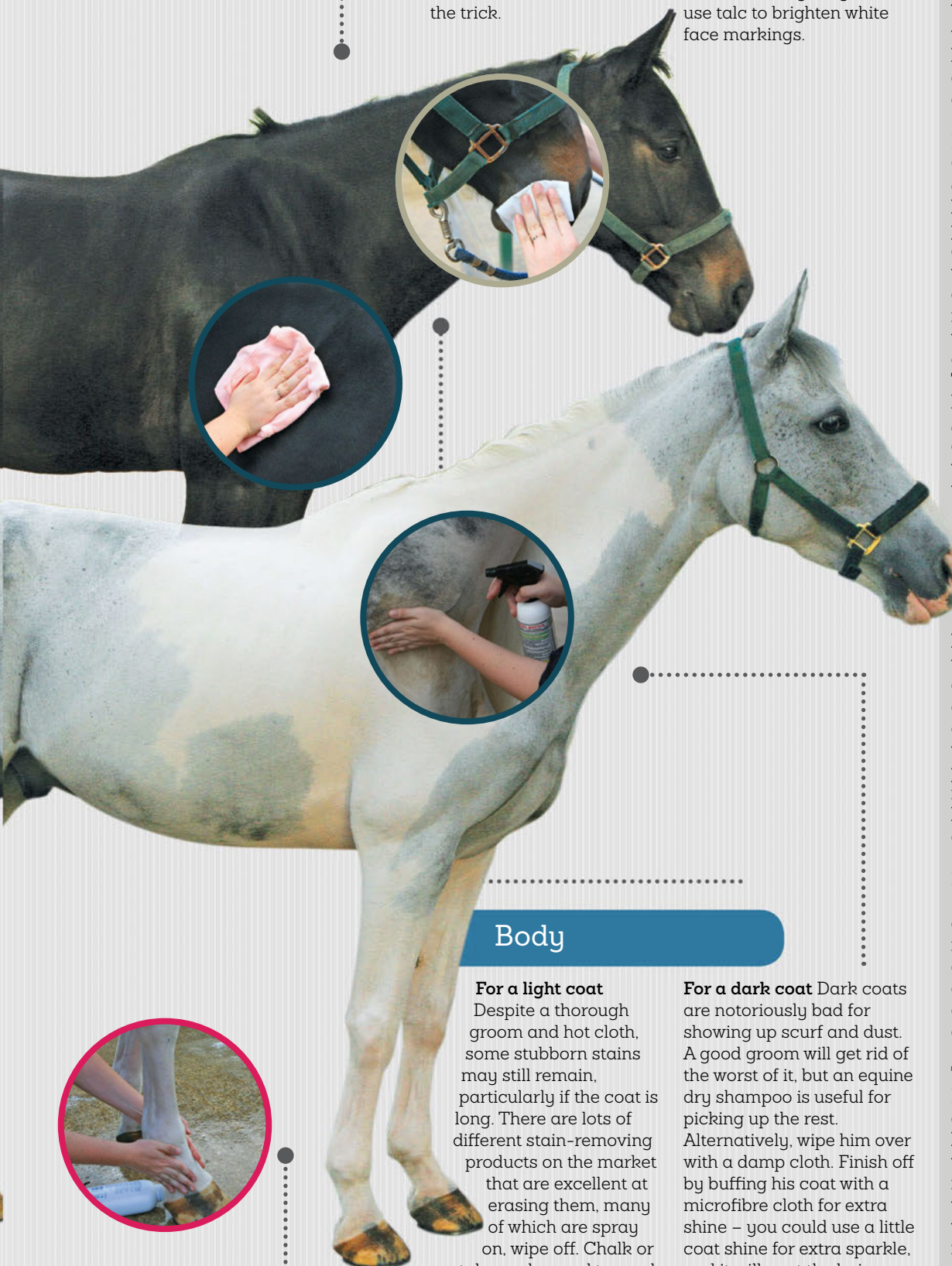
Tail

➤ The night before a show or if your horse is being turned out in a muddy field, plait the bottom of his tail to help keep it clean.

Body

For a light coat Despite a thorough groom and hot cloth, some stubborn stains may still remain, particularly if the coat is long. There are lots of different stain-removing products on the market that are excellent at erasing them, many of which are spray on, wipe off. Chalk or talc can be used to mask any remaining yellowing.

For a dark coat Dark coats are notoriously bad for showing up scurf and dust. A good groom will get rid of the worst of it, but an equine dry shampoo is useful for picking up the rest. Alternatively, wipe him over with a damp cloth. Finish off by buffing his coat with a microfibre cloth for extra shine – you could use a little coat shine for extra sparkle, and it will coat the hair which will help to repel dirt.



Useful grooming solutions

Absorbine ShowSheen Stain Remover & Whitener

Contains Oxi-Erasers to lift out stains, simply sprays on and rinses off. Can also be used as a pre-treatment for stubborn stains.
RRP: £10.35 for 591ml
absorbine.co.uk

Carr & Day & Martin Canter Mane & Tail

Powerful detangler and long-lasting conditioner, makes grooming easy and leaves an oil-free shine.
RRP: £11.70 for 600ml
0845 500 4040
carrdaymartin.co.uk

Cowboy Magic Greenspot Remover

Instantly breaks down foreign molecules, and dissolves manure, urine, dirt and sweat, melting them away. It also conditions and adds shine.
RRP: £9.94 for 473ml,
£18.80 for 946ml,
£54.10 for 3.7 litres
worldwidetack.com

Nettex Blemish Cover-Up Spray

Designed to hide blemishes, scars and bald patches, it's available in black or white, and can be used to enhance black points or touch up stubborn stains on white areas.
RRP: £5.99 for 250ml
01634 257150
nettexequine.com

Barrier Animal Healthcare Natural Lavender Wash

Low-lathering, no-rinse wash, made using the purest high-grade lavender and coconut derivatives, chosen for their cleaning and conditioning qualities.
RRP: £7.90 for 500ml,
£12.70 for 1 litre,
£59.40 for 5 litres
flyrepel.com

Lincoln Total Groom

Removes dirt and stains, while conditioning at the same time. It actively repels dirt and stains.
RRP: £9.90 for 500ml
lincoln-equestrian.com

NAF Love the SKIN he's in Skin Wash

Ideal for horses with skin problems, it is designed to offer gentle, yet effective cleansing, and to lift sweat, grease and dust from the coat. Can be used for hot clothing or used neat on the affected area. Comes with a deep-cleansing towel.
RRP: £19.95 for 1 litre
naf-equine.eu/uk

Groom Away stainaway

A completely natural formula that easily frees dirt and stains from the coat without irritating the skin. Leaves the coat clean, soft and shiny.
RRP: £8.99 for 500ml
flyaway.ltd.uk



★★★ Rate this feature

Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Helping you & your horse

How to select the best bit for your horse

Here are two Myler mouthpieces. They look similar, but there are important differences:



MB04 Low Port Comfort Snaffle



MB06 Ported Mullen

- Both bits have similar sized ports, creating tongue room for swallowing
- Both have Independent Side Movement, giving a clearer lateral aid
- Both are curved forward to accommodate the tongue
- Both mouthpieces are available as snaffles; Pelhams; and Myler Combinations

- The MB04 is a double jointed bit (like a French Link) and so collapses to wrap the outer lips and bars (but without the nutcracker action of a regular snaffle.)
- Some horses respond better to movement of the bit within the mouth and to pressure on the outside from the collapse.
- The action of the MB04 is similar to a lozenge bit, but the tongue room from the port will allow the horse to swallow more easily, thereby reducing stress and tension, and the joint will not catch the tongue

- The MB06 is a 'solid', non-collapsing bit, so it is much stiller in the mouth (although it does have ISM).
- Because there is no collapse, there is no pressure on the outer lips or bars, which some horses prefer.
- While the port gives swallowing room, the non-collapsing action maintains the bit's width, so it may be better for a horse with a wedge-shaped face which could be subjected to pressure from the cheeks of a collapsing bit.

To decide which mouthpiece would be best for your horse, consider:

- what are you trying to improve?
- how is your horse resisting?
- how has he responded to other bits you have used and how did their actions differ?
- what is his mouth like (eg big tongue; fleshy lips; short muzzle, etc)

Read the Myler's book with DVD
"The Level Best for Your Horse."

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a 'cheeky'
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The stirrup evolved from a loop hanging from the saddle, used in ancient times to aid mounting, to today's high-tech saddle essential. But in the last few decades, this integral piece of kit has undergone a revolution and many options are now available for all needs.

Sore knees, for example, may benefit from jointed stirrups, while showjumpers often prefer the support wide-tread stirrups offer and hacking riders may appreciate light, composite stirrups. However, whatever your preference, make sure your stirrup is the correct size for you – with half an inch of clearance on either side of your foot when it's properly placed in the stirrup.

Eye

Branch

Tread

Put your foot in it

Sore feet and losing stirrups are a thing of the past with the newest technology in stirrups

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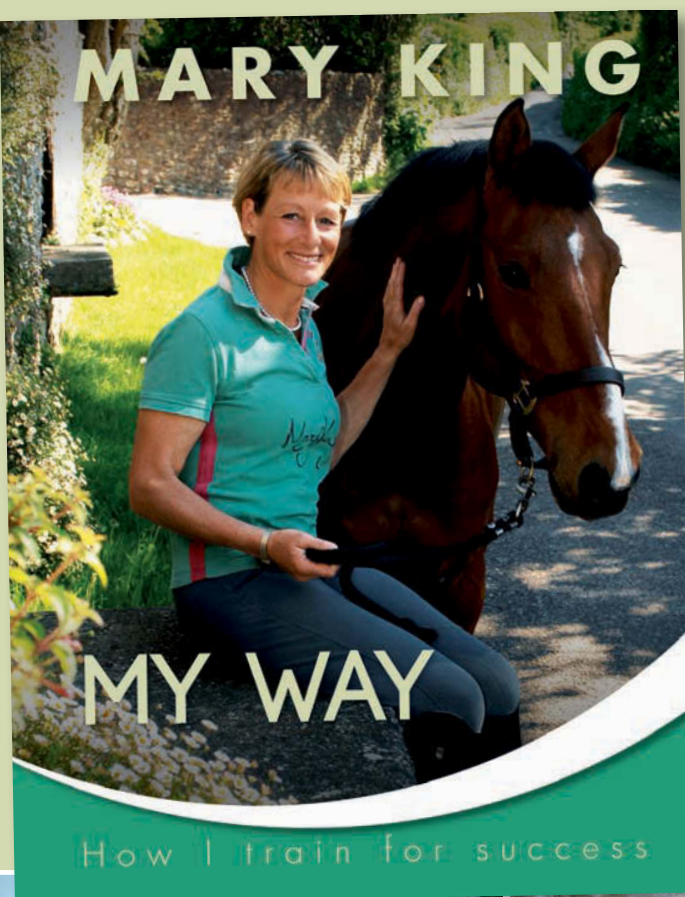
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⌚ Light as a feather

Amerigo STAF 11 stirrups are made from aluminium with a super-grippy 'cheese grater' tread option. The eye is angled at 30° to help the stirrups hang in the correct position. They're available in black or bi-coloured silver or gold with black tread, in medium or large.

RRP: £160

☎ 01352 763350
zebraproducts.co.uk

⌚ No frills

Fouganza stainless steel stirrups are everyday Fillis stirrup irons. Fillis-type stirrups feature rounded branches and these come with black, textured stirrup treads for good grip. Available in 110mm or 120mm.

RRP: £15.99

decathlon.co.uk

⌚ Safety standard

Battles bent-leg safety stirrup irons feature a curved branch that helps to prevent the foot from getting caught in the stirrup, should you fall. They're available in 3¼in, 4in, 4½in, 4¾in or 5in.

RRP: £28.60

battles.co.uk

⌚ Custom angle

CSO wide, adjustable stirrups feature wide treads that can be angled for optimum leg position with the Allen key provided. They're great for riders who get sore hips, knees or ankles with more traditional stirrups. One size.

RRP: £54.90 for rubber treads, £71.90 for stainless steel treads
ekkia.co.uk



⬆ Safety meets style

Freejump Soft'up Pro stirrups feature a one-piece, tempered, sprung steel main branch and a flexible outer branch that will allow the rider's foot to come free in the event of a fall. The triangular eye is angled at 45° and is compatible with traditional stirrup leathers or Freejump's own single-strap style. Available in red, blue, black, violet, vanilla or chocolate, in children's or adult's sizes.

RRP: £219
freejumpssystem.com

⬆ Children's choice

Eldonian stainless steel peacock stirrups by Jeffries are great for children and lightweight adults. They feature rubber rings on the outside branch, designed to allow the foot to break free if the rider should fall. These should only be used with the lightest of riders because the weight of an average adult may cause the stirrup to break as the tread is only supported on one side. Available in 3½in, 3¾in, 4in, 4¼in or 4½in.

RRP: £24.42
jeffries.co.uk

⬆ Bend and flex

JHL Pro-Steel flexible stirrups are stainless steel irons with rubber-covered links that help the rider's heel drop easily, as well as reduce pressure and jarring on knee and ankle joints. These come with grey stirrup treads and are available in 4¼in, 4½in, 4¾in or 5in.

RRP: £39.99
 ☎ 01303 872277
wefi.co.uk

⬆ Angled aluminium

Jin Kinko stirrups are made from high-quality, lightweight aluminium and feature a grippy, angled footbed to allow the rider to comfortably put their weight into their heels. The tread is wider than that of a traditional stirrup to allow greater stability. Available in black, brown, titan gold or silver. One size.

RRP: From £130
jinstirrup.it



⬆ Magnetic attraction

OnTyte lightweight composite stirrups feature magnets embedded within the stirrup tread which, when paired with OnTyte boots or your boots resoled with the OnTyte resole kit, help increase stability and solve the problem of lost stirrups. The magnetic attraction is designed to easily break in the event of a fall or for dismounting. Available in 4¾in or 5in.

RRP: Stirrups from £165, OnTyte resole kit £95, ready-made boots around £235
ontyte.com

⬆ Colour co-ordinate

Compositi premium profile stirrups from Shires are elegant, lightweight and strong with stirrup treads that can be customised to co-ordinate with your colours. Treads are available in green, bright green, orange, red, bright blue, royal, pink, silver grey, black or purple. One size.

RRP: £18.50
 ☎ 01568 613600
shiresequestrian.com

⬆ Balance and stability

Sprenger Bow Balance stirrups have four-direction flexibility with jointed, curved branches. The tread is widened and provides grip with two types of rubber. These stirrups are designed to help rider stability and reduce impact on joints and ligaments. They're available in 112mm, 122mm or 132mm.

RRP: £162.76
zebraproducts.co.uk

⬆ Lightweight and grippy

Stübben Steeltec Maxigrip stirrups are extremely lightweight, at only 350g per stirrup, and grippy with a wide, inclined tread. They're made from high-quality aluminium alloy with a durable anodised finish. One size.

RRP: £164.50
stuebben.com



👉 Tough but light

Thorowgood Tuff stirrups are lightweight polymer stirrups. Unlike heavy irons, they're less likely to startle your horse if they happen to knock against his sides or elbows. They're easy to clean and come with a grippy tread. Available in 4in or 4½ in, in black.

RRP: £11.95
thorowgood.com

👉 Brilliant breakaway

Mountain Horse QRS stirrups are sturdy stainless steel stirrups that look like normal irons, but have a rubber release tube integrated into their construction – great for adults who wish to have the benefit of a breakaway-type stirrup. The SCS3 system is permitted for use in BHS, BSJA, BD and BE competitions, but is not accepted under Pony Club rules. One size.

RRP: £115
 ☎ 01462 432596
mountainhorse.co.uk

👉 Personalised positioning

MDC Ultimate stirrups have a swivelling eye that allows the stirrup to be angled at 45° or 90°, depending on rider preference. This allows the stirrup to be easily regained if lost, and aims to reduce pressure on joints and soft tissue. They also have jointed branches for comfort and shock absorption. Available in 4½in, 4½in, 4¾in or 5in.

RRP: Around £118
mdcstirrups.com

👉 Traditional favourite

Bridleway Prussia stirrup irons are made from lightweight, top-quality stainless steel and feature flat-sided branches, thin bases and roughened treads. Available in 3½in, 4in, 4½in, 4½in, 4¾in, 5in, 5½in or 5¾in.

RRP: £26.95
 ☎ 0845 241 9970
bridlewayequestrian.com

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Back to basics

Horse riding in Iceland

There's no better way to explore Iceland than on horseback. Yayeri van Baarsen discovers that in Europe's least populated country, horses aren't just a convenient way to enjoy the stunning scenery, but are an important part of Icelandic life and society



Clouds of dust form as hooves thunder rhythmically over the ground. I briefly wonder if, instead of the reins, I could hold a pint of beer in my hand without spilling any of the liquid. This, Icelanders claim, is the best way to show how comfortable tölt – the smooth four-beat running walk their horses are most famous for – is. Instead, I decide to enjoy the backdrop of lush green valleys and look out for whales in the Eyjafjörður, Iceland's longest fjord.

At the end of a whole day's riding, I'm surprised to realise I don't ache at all – Icelandic horses are very comfortable indeed. They have to be, since horses were the main form of transportation in the country until the first cars arrived on the island, back in 1940. Before this, all travelling was done on horseback because most roads weren't even suitable for carts.

Bearing in mind the history, it's easy to see why Icelandic horses were considered mankind's most loyal servants. Barely a century ago, the midwife arrived on horseback. The children she delivered grew up amid horses and turned into adults who used their horses every day, no matter their profession. When they died, their four-legged companions pulled the coffin to the grave. Without horses, living in Iceland would have been impossible.



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Objects of affection

Despite the arrival of motorised transport, the bond between Icelanders and their horses remains strong. Worshipped in Norse mythology, horses are still considered a national treasure. They are honoured in shows at the Icelandic Horse Theatre at Fákasel and admired by thousands at Landsmót, the National Icelandic Horse Show.

Landsmót is a chance to show off the five gaits (walk, trot, canter/gallop – which is considered one gait – tölt and pace) as well as the country's biggest horse festival. In Iceland, there are 240 horses for every 1,000 people. In the rest of Europe, the figure is just 13 horses for every 1,000 people. And it seems that everyone rides. Viggó Sigurðsson, owner of riding tour company Viking Horses, says: "Horses get people from all layers of society together. It doesn't matter whether you're a farmer, a car salesman or a doctor. On horseback you're all just riders."

Fun the Viking way

Viggó got into horses when he was a kid. "When growing up, I could see stables from my bedroom window. Then when I was a teenager, my parents made me choose between getting a horse or a motorbike. I chose wisely," he grins.

Together with his mother, Svava Aldís Viggósdóttir, and sister, Harpa Hödd Sigurðardóttir, Viggó has recently taken over the family business, Viking Horses, offering riding tours and specialising in small groups. He moved house to be closer to his 30 horses and now lives above the stables. Located 15 minutes outside Reykjavík's city centre, it feels like a different world in part thanks to the nearby Rauðhólar (red hills), 5,200-year-old remnants of a cluster of pseudocraters. These lava formations are part of the Heiðmörk nature reserve, a landscape with something new to see behind every corner and that, naturally, is best discovered on horseback.

At first sight, my mount Sirius looks like a cute pony (Icelandic horses stand an average of 13–14hh), but the black five-year-old is strong enough to carry a grown man. He holds himself proudly, and once I master the aids, the lightest touch is enough to make him change gait into tölt, which feels like he's dancing. Tölting is made easier by the fact that on Icelandic horses the saddle is set further back to allow for shoulder movement. Noticing my confidence on Sirius' back and both our enjoyment during the hack, Viggó suggests going for a swim in the nature reserve. Bareback, Sirius is just as easy to ride and even though it's his first time swimming, he splashes through the water with a fearless attitude that clearly shows he's a descendant of the sturdy horses the Vikings imported all those years ago.



Viggó tells me: "Icelandic horses are strong, kind, amazing creatures that just belong in nature. I love riding at night in June, when it's light for almost 24 hours a day. You can ride for hours in the countryside without encountering a soul. It's a perfect moment – just me, the horse and nature."

*It's a perfect moment –
just me, the horse
and nature*



Horse&Rider recommends you wear a current, up-to-standard riding hat when you're mounted

Hippie horse

Since most tourists stay around the Reykjavík area, even more unspoilt nature can be found in the north of Iceland. Surrounded by mountain tops that are covered in snow even in the middle of summer, the location near Akureyri seems an aptly chosen spot for a riding centre. Pólar Hestar, meaning 'pole horse' in Icelandic, is run by Stefán Kristjánsson, Juliane Kauertz and their 14-year-old son Simon. They own no less than 130 horses from different parts of the country. The horses are connected to all aspects of the family's lives: the couple even met during a horse riding tour, back in 1993. Stefán explains: "My horses are so much more than my work. I have been with them for all my life, they are a part of me."

The horses with their windswept, shaggy manes seem perfectly at home

Stefán and his family run Pólar Hestar



Their thick coats and shaggy manes keep Icelandic horses warm

While horses turned out wearing headcollars is a common sight in much of Europe, Iceland is different – none of the horses I see wear a halter in the field. I ask Stefán whether this makes them harder to catch. "No worries, if needed we'll just walk a bit longer," he tells me. That casual atmosphere stretches from catching the horse to the menagerie of other farm animals strolling around and even to the way one mounts a horse in Iceland. "Do you really think the horse cares which side you get up?" is the question I'm asked when walking around Hekla to get to her left side.

The horses themselves, with their windswept, shaggy manes seem perfectly at home – it's hard to picture them with a plaited mane in a dressage competition. And the same can be said for the riders. Within 15 minutes, Hekla enthusiastically canters through a particularly boggy patch and gives my pristine breeches a camouflage pattern of mud.



Despite the dirt, the Icelandic way of riding, which is more free than in other European countries, holds a huge appeal. There is no strict order during our hacks, and the horses merrily trot along together and when there's time for a break, we loosen the noseband to let the horses eat. The saying 'sit back, relax and enjoy the ride' perfectly describes recreational riding in Iceland.

Adapted to nature

When riding through the hills in the Grótubakki area, galloping over tiny paths with sharp rocks either side (and in the middle) and tölting through fields still sluggish from melted snow, I wonder how Hekla finds her way without stumbling. Even jumping over a little river in the so-called Valley of the Elves is no problem: my horse moves as sure as a mountain goat. Stefán explains: "The horses have adapted to this landscape. The first four years of their lives, we leave them out to roam free on almost 2,500 acres of land. This way they are sure-footed when we begin their training."

The horses live out all winter, no matter how hard it snows. In that respect, not much has changed for the Icelandic horses since they were first brought to the island by the Vikings in the 9th Century. The exposure to the elements and the isolation in the harsh Icelandic climate for more than 1,000 years has made for one of the most pure horse breeds in the world. The horse has no natural predators on the island and as a result, when encountering something new, they are more inclined to stop and think rather than to panic and flee.

Renowned all over the world for their spirited character and stamina, they are also well suited to the novice rider. At Pólar Hestar, I watch a beginner group before their ride, unsure of how to approach the furry animals and wondering aloud how they'll be able to 'climb on top of it and hold onto these ropes'. An hour later, most of them are



cuddling their horses and whispering words of thanks, and all are reluctant to leave.

Stefán's wife Juliane explains: "I completely trust my horses, I'd give my life for them." She tells me about one of her first rides in Iceland where she got lost in heavy fog and let her horse guide her back home. As Juliane talks, I realise one thing for sure: this is certainly not the last time I'll be horse riding in Iceland.

Want to go riding in Iceland? Here are five tips...

► **Do disinfect** To protect Icelandic horses from infectious diseases, it's forbidden to bring used riding equipment (for example, saddles or bridles) into the country. Used riding clothes can be imported, but they must be disinfected, thoroughly washed or dry cleaned.

► **Be honest and clear about your experience** 'I've ridden before' can mean that you've sat on a horse once, but also that you've had twice-weekly lessons on your own horse for the last seven years. The more information you provide, the better the chance that the stable owner will be able to find you a suitable horse.

► **Read up beforehand** Although most stables offer great hacks in amazing surroundings, there are companies whose idea of riding in Iceland consists of having 50 horses walk in a strict line for two hours. Not that fun. Do some research into the options before you book.

► **Choose your time** Icelandic summer days are long, with almost 24 hours of daylight, and it's probably the best time to go. Most riding schools close in winter. Some offer tours all year round, allowing you to ride in a landscape covered in snow. No matter the season, be aware of the Icelandic weather: rain for two days out of three isn't uncommon.

► **Leave taking photos to the breaks** Most stables will tell you not to sit and shoot, but even if they don't, concentrate on riding your horse and the beautiful surroundings instead of taking pictures. It's not only safer, it'll also mean you won't have to delete 241 wonky shots of a horse's back end.

Iceland fact file



Population: 325,000 (the same as Nottingham)

Capital: Reykjavík

Time zone: GMT

Currency: Króna (ISK)

£1 is worth 191ISK

Pint of beer: 900ISK

Useful words:

Já – yes

Nei – no

Takk – thank you



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Go to tinyurl.com/RateJan15 for a chance to win a Mountain Horse Crew jacket (see p9).

Top 10 tackroom essentials

We horsey folk spend so much time at the yard that it's practically a second home. Here's a list of things that will make your time there just that little bit easier



- 1 **First-aid kits for you and your horse**, because you never know when you're going to need a plaster, poultice or painkiller.
- 2 **Rain coat** for when those unexpected showers catch you out.
- 3 **Phone charger** because a charged phone is essential on hacks and we've all forgotten to plug ours in the night before.
- 4 **Horse&Rider** for when your farrier's late or you've got 10 minutes to wait while your horse finishes his feed. Definitely time to catch up on the latest horsey articles.
- 5 **Kettle** and a mug! Multi-purpose, from making a cuppa to a bran mash or a poultice.
- 6 **Torch** for when there's a power cut, but your horse just can't wait for his dinner.
- 7 **Pad and pen** because nobody's memory is as good as they think it is.
- 8 **Tablet** which is a bit of an extravagance, but sometimes you just need to do that quick internet search. Plus, some music while tack cleaning never goes amiss.
- 9 **Change of clothes** for when you've slipped over in the mud, your horse has wiped slobber down your front and a huge hole has somehow appeared in your jodhpurs, but you have to stop at the supermarket on your way home. We've all been there.
- 10 **Penknife** for anything from slicing baler twine to opening a bottle of wine (to celebrate or commiserate – the choice is yours). You can even buy special equestrian ones for extra practicality.



What are your tackroom essentials?

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What's *in store*?

Check out some of the great new horsey stuff this month

Bag a winner

The **Dublin Imperial grooming bag** has a lid with zip closure to help keep out bedding and dirt, while the external pockets keep items close to hand.

Colour: chocolate cream

RRP: £24.99

dublinclothing.co.uk



Great grooming

Botanica 5-in-1 spray is formulated to tackle dust, dirt and stains, giving a smooth and silky coat.

RRP: £12.99 for 750ml

botanica.ie

Jack it up

Snuggle up to the **Horse Pilot down jacket**, a lightweight down-filled jacket that looks great in the saddle or on the town.

Sizes: Men's and women's XS-XXL

RRP: £210

horsepilot.com



“Banish dust, dirt and stains with a spritz”

No more mud

Winter can be a challenging time for horse owners and the impact of muddy fields on horses' legs can be a major concern. **Murphy's No More Mud!** contains coconut, neem, calendula, thyme, tea tree and lavender oils, and can be used as a barrier to help maintain healthy skin.

RRP: £15

murphys-fly-spray.co.uk

Winter warmer

Keep your horse cosy in the **Bucas Freedom turnout** with full neck. It's available in three weights – light (no fill), 150g or 300g.

Colours: Jade, navy or samba

Sizes: 5ft–7ft

RRP: Light £87, 150g £95,

300g £102

bucas.com

Relax and perform

The **RP girth** from **Prestige** helps evenly distribute pressure over a broad surface for comfort. Available in jumping or dressage style.

Size: 110–145cm for jumping and

50–80cm for dressage

Colours: Tobacco or black

RRP: £230

prestigeitaly.com



“Keep him snug and warm this winter”

Stomach it

TopSpec UlsaKind cubes are formulated to be highly sympathetic to the equine digestive system, even when it is compromised by excess acidity. They're low in starch and sugar, but high in fibre.

RRP: £12.50 for 20kg

☎ 01845 565030

topspec.com



Tried&tested

Glamourati Starry mini glitter tattoo kit for horses

RRP: £39.99

glamouratiuk.com

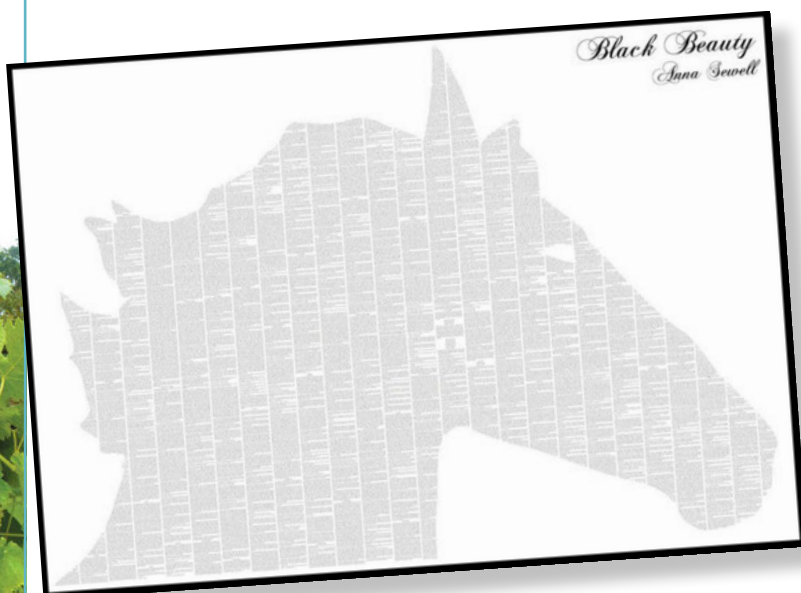
H&R tester: “I used the Starry set on my bay mare and I was so pleased with the results. It was very easy to use and the instructions are clear. I thought the self-adhesive stencils were a great idea. Concentrate on ensuring the glue is evenly distributed and don't worry about holding onto the stencil with the other hand! Once the glue was in place, it was easy enough to achieve an even coverage of the glitter. I was surprised not to get covered in glitter myself, but the sponges supplied in the kit held on to the glitter until it was placed onto the glued area. I left the stars on over a weekend, then removed them with warm water by gently rubbing them off.”





Textile animal art by Jo Rochester

RRP: From £120
☎ 07711 886824
jorochester.com



Spineless Classics poster

RRP: £39.99
spinelessclassics.com

This month we love...

★ ...Heads up

A **Textile animal head by Jo Rochester** is a great, quirky gift idea. Each one is unique and they're handmade in Norfolk with Harris Tweeds and patchwork pieces.

★ ...A real page turner

Showcase your favourite horsey read with a **Spineless Classics poster**. The Black Beauty poster features the entire text of Anna Sewell's classic novel in the shape of a horse's head.

★ ...Sparkle and suede

Glitter with the **Otto Schumacher crystal and suede bracelet** from Dressage

Deluxe with seven rows of Swarovski crystals on a soft suede band.

★ ...Starry night

Chase the chills with the trendy **Tottie Cosmic dual layered rug**, featuring a starry print and heavyweight fleece.

★ ...Personal touch

Equi Bebb personalised competition whips are monogrammed with your initials and available in different whip designs.



Equi Bebb personalised competition whips

RRP: £30
☎ 01235 370955



Tottie Cosmic dual layered rug

RRP: From £73.95
☎ 01274 711101
tottie.co.uk

Perfect prizes!

£1,051-worth of prizes to be won!

5 Give him confidence

to win! Five lucky readers will each win a **box of ConfidenceEQ**, worth £55 each. It's an innovative pheromone gel that may help horses to cope with new or troubling situations, such as loading, travelling, clipping, changes in routine, training, exposure to loud noises, dentist, farrier or veterinary visits.

Simply apply the gel to the nostrils 30 minutes before the stressful event – the effects last up to two-and-a-half hours. The box contains 10 sachets and is available from your veterinary surgeon, country store, tack shop or online.



For more information, call ☎ 01494 781510 or visit confidenceequine.com/uk

24 Fab feed

to win! Twenty-four lucky readers will each win a bag of **Equerry Cool Mix**, worth £10.45 each. It's ideal for horses and ponies in light work, and those who tend to be sharp or fizzy. It contains low levels of sugar and starch, and added vitamins and minerals including magnesium.

Cool Mix is formulated by experienced nutritionists, using only the best-quality ingredients and is produced under the BETA NOPS scheme, giving horse owners peace of mind. It combines highly digestible fibre sources, balanced with vitamins and minerals to support health and wellbeing.



For more information, call ☎ 01845 565640 or visit equerryhorsefeeds.com

1 Cosy coat

to win! One lucky reader will win a **Mountain Horse Belvedere coat**, worth £250. Designed for the coldest of winters, the knee-length coat is down- and feather-filled for the ultimate in all-over lightweight warmth. The extra-high collar helps keep out winter wind and the luxurious faux fur trim on the removable hood is detachable, too. Knitted inner cuffs with thumb holes also help keep out the winter draughts. It's ideal for instructors who are outside all day, but can also be used in the saddle, thanks to the rear riding vent and full-length two-way zip at the front. There's gold embroidery on the sleeve, chest and collar to add to the classy look.

Available in black, in ladies' sizes XS-XXL.



For more information, visit ☎ 01462 432596 or visit mountainhorse.co.uk

1 Hair wear

to win! One lucky winner will win a **bespoke horse hair jewellery set** from Horsehairs, in all worth £275, including a stock pin, keyring, bracelet and braided necklace pendant. The set is designed and finished by jeweller Rebecca Wenzel. Pieces from Horsehairs are available in sterling silver, or yellow or white gold. With ranges for men, women and children, including bracelets, necklaces, rings, stock pins, keyrings and cufflinks, Horsehairs offers something for every horse lover. Every piece is made from your own horse's hair and makes a wonderful keepsake, as well as a stunning piece of jewellery.



For more information, call ☎ 01438 880936, or visit horsehairs.co.uk

To enter, complete the form on **page 152** or visit horseandridercompetitions.co.uk
Entries must be received by 31 January 2015

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include your complete contact details. Attach up to four landscape-shaped photos as jpgs. Email your advert to horsesforsale@djmurphy.co.uk



BY MAIL Send your horse's details with four clear,

landscape-shaped photos and an SAE to: Horses for sale, *Horse&Rider*, Marlborough House, Headley Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6LG.

See your advert online at horseandrideruk.com plus we'll publish a select few inside ***Horse&Rider*** magazine



Beautiful TB mare

● **16.1hh**, TB mare, 3 yrs. Gorgeous filly by Tobougg, showing a lot of potential. Hacks out alone or in company. Has had inconsistent work over the summer, but is very chilled. Sad sale due to lack of time. £1,500.
☎ **01722 714342 (South West)**



● **13hh**, Welsh X, mare, 4 yrs. Little star, never silly or spooky, forward going, responsive ride. Scored 72% in her first DR test, jumping 1m at home. £1,900.
☎ **07715 530445 (Worcestershire)**



● **15.3hh**, ID X, mare, 13 yrs. Very sad sale, same home for 5 years, never sick or sorry. Has done sponsored rides and hunted, bold and brave. £3,000.
☎ **07504 655697 (East Sussex)**



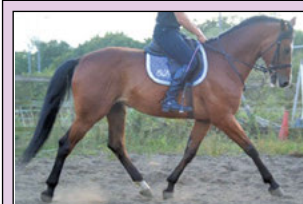
● **14.1hh**, Connemara mare, 21 yrs. Fit, healthy second pony who loves to jump. Super fun with plenty of life left to give. Snaffle-mouthed, sad sale. £1,200.
☎ **07852 182870 (Notts)**



● **14.1hh**, New Forest gelding, 4 yrs. Correct, uphill conformation, versatile, genuine and straightforward. Adores people, superb to hack. £3,000.
☎ **01403 790220 (West Sussex)**



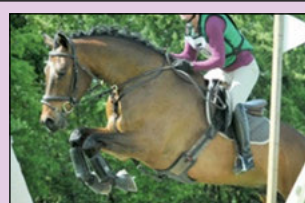
● **14hh**, ISH mare, 15 yrs. Sweet natured and smart, loves to jump both XC and SJ. Forward going, would suit a jockey who wants to win. £2,250.
☎ **07500 444599 (Cheshire)**



● **17hh**, warmblood gelding, 7 yrs. Striking dressage prospect, genuine character with three active paces. Sensible, trainable nature, confidence giver. £5,000.
☎ **07756 288390 (Surrey)**



● **Less than 8hh**, miniature, gelding, 6 yrs. Not broken to ride but very trainable, shown successfully, always placed. For sale with full wardrobe. Sad sale. £700.
☎ **07525 660028 (Worcestershire)**



● **17.2hh**, warmblood gelding, 5 yrs. All-rounder, outstanding at DR. Currently competing BD Prelim, ready to move up to Novice. Jumps 1.20m at home. £10,000.
☎ **07528 472212 (Bucks)**



Fantastic second pony

● **14.1hh**, Arab mare, 9 yrs. Sadly outgrown, done all PC activities, fantastic jumper with lots of scope. Always placed in top four DR, can get excited SJ. Good to handle and with children, loves to work. Lives in or out, tack and rugs included. 5* home is a must. £3,995.
☎ **01945 430334 (Cambridgeshire)**



● **13.2hh**, Welsh Section B mare, 7 yrs. No vices, 100% child's pony, only for sale as sadly outgrown. Never fizzy, happy to be on her own, always in the ribbons. £3,500.
☎ 07973 617294 (Devon)



● **16.1hh**, Lusitano gelding, 15 yrs. Schoolmaster, extension, passage, tempi changes, pirouettes and lovely lateral work all established. Easy to handle. £7,000.
☎ 01538 756079 (Gwynedd)



Showjumping prospect

● **16hh**, warmblood mare, 7 yrs. Has been taken out to competitions and placed in 1.15m classes. Good to hack alone or in company. A genuine character who is always trying to please. £5,000.
☎ 07756 288390 (South East)



● **14hh**, Welsh X, gelding, 7 yrs. Kind natured and great to handle. Hacks out alone or in company, has been to local shows and travels well. Sadly outgrown. £1,750.
☎ 07930 557489 (East Yorkshire)



● **To make 16.3hh**, ID X, filly, 1 yr. Potential event/sport horse, must go to good home where full potential will be realised. Pedigree details available. £3,000.
☎ 07939 443634 (Surrey)



● **16hh**, ISH mare, 10 yrs. Done PC activities and jumps 1.05m at home with scope. Not a novice ride as can be strong. Heartbreaking sale. £5,000.
☎ 07712 675653 (Kent)



● **15.3hh**, TB X, mare, 13 yrs. Has competed BE with previous owner, never refuses. Snaffle-mouthed at all times, sad sale due to lack of time for this lovely mare. £3,600.
☎ 01904 709575 (North Yorkshire)



Talented gentleman

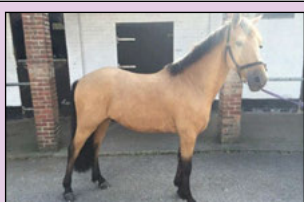
● **16.1hh**, ISH gelding, 8 yrs. Willing attitude. Professionally schooled over showjumps and jumped 1.10m at shows. Would easily do BD, BSJA or WH. Plenty of videos and pictures available on request, full breeding can be provided. £9,000.
☎ 07765 653785 (Norfolk)



● **16.2hh**, Selle Français mare, 15 yrs. Showing great potential in DR, won gold medal SJ in 2007 in Children on Horses European Championships. £3,000.
☎ 07581 482533 (East Yorkshire)



● **16.1hh**, ISH gelding, 5 yrs. Easy going, genuine chap. Hacks out alone or in company, jumps anything. Would make hunter or potential eventer. £5,200.
☎ 07867 353981 (Gloucestershire)



● **14.3hh**, Connemara gelding, 6 yrs. Lightweight and athletic, lovely, quiet boy. Suit teen or small adult, will make a fantastic hunt horse. £4,500 ono.
☎ 0191 488 0620 (Tyne and Wear)



● **15.3hh**, ID mare, 4 yrs. Done sponsored rides and hunted. Hacks out alone or in company. Quiet to handle, 100% in every way, no bad habits. £2,500.
Email: fanningjk@hotmail.com



● **14.2hh**, cob mare, 4 yrs. Kind, sweet nature and easy to handle. Forward going but sensible, snaffle-mouthed. Ideal PC, hunter, mother/daughter share. £1,500.
☎ 01694 751488 (Shropshire)



● **15.3hh**, warmblood X, mare, 5 yrs. Huge potential in the right hands, mentality and ability to succeed in any career. Sad sale of wonderful mare. £4,500.
☎ 07835 163644 (Shropshire)

Talented and experienced

● **14hh**, New Forest gelding, 13 yrs. Ideal second pony, would suit confident rider, main discipline is DR. Snaffle-mouthed, would make perfect PC pony. Perfect to hack out in company/alone and safe with traffic. Good to clip, load and catch, lives in or out. £2,400.
☎ 01268 282837 (Essex)



JARGON BUSTER BD: British Dressage; BN: British Novice; BS: British Showjumping; CS: cob size; CT: combined training; Disc: Discovery; DR: dressage; ER: endurance ride; Exp: experienced; F/M: freezemark; FR: first ridden; FS: full size; HDT: horse driving trials; HT: hunter trials; ID: Irish Draught; Inc: including; ISH: Irish Sport Horse; LDR: long-distance rides; LR: lead rein; M/chip: microchip; MG: mounted games; M/W: middleweight; ODE: one-day event; P/port: passport; PBA: part-bred Arab; PC: Pony Club; POA: price on application PS: pony size; pt-2-pt: point-to-point; R&D: ride-and-drive; RC: Riding Club; Reg: registered; ROR: Retraining of racehorses; Sec: section; SJ: showjumping; TB: Thoroughbred; Vacc: vaccinated; WB: Warmblood; WHP: working hunter pony; XC: cross-country.

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A family abode

The bungalow has three bedrooms, a lounge with a wood-burning stove and a lovely, modern breakfast/kitchen/living area. The annexe contains two bedrooms with a bathroom, kitchen/diner and lounge. Double-glazed windows, gas central heating and high-quality fittings make this property luxurious and distinctive for the equestrian buyer.

A yard of distinction

The beautiful American barn features a brick exterior and roomy interior, with five rubber-matted stables. There's a tack room and workshop with space for repairs and yard maintenance. There's another barn for storage that also serves as a paddock shelter – all



equipped with lights and water. The paddock extends to around 3.5 acres.

What's more, there's a portable cabin with office space, heat, light and a security system. There's lots of hard-standing for horsebox parking and the American barn's doors are tall enough to accommodate a horsebox, too.

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- 🔑 All-weather, floodlit manège
- 🔑 American barn with five rubber-matted stables
- 🔑 4.9 acres
- 🔑 Tack room, workshop and storage area
- 🔑 Storage barn/paddock shelter
- 🔑 Portable cabin office with heat, light and security system

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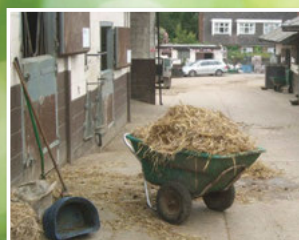
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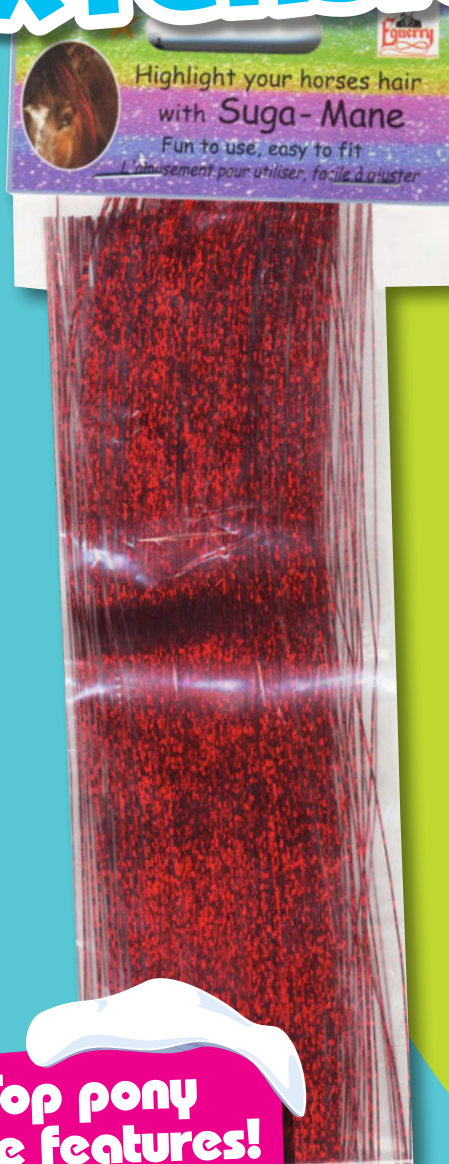
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Page 64 WIN! Training from Jason Webb and Champion gear

Jacket size (XXS–XXL)

Answer

Tie-breaker (max 50 words)

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Page 141 Perfect prizes! (Tick which you'd like to win)

☐ CEJAN/15 A box of Confidence EQ

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Question What is the active ingredient in Confidence EQ?

Tie-breaker Which top rider do you admire the most? (max 50 words)

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My life with horses

Andrew Finding, Deborah Meaden, Ben Maher – and me!



Steven Wilde got behind the microphone in 2001, thinking it might be fun to 'have a go'.

An avid fan of all equestrian sports, he has been a part of the commentary team for countless international competitions, including the London 2012 Olympics, the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials and the Longines Global Champions Tour.

When not on a plane, at a show or interviewing horsey celebs, commentator Steven Wilde is partial to a round of golf, a good wine and catching up on some sleep!

Best foot forward...

Monday

I've been in Palm Beach, Florida, for the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival. But now (after some shoe shopping), I'm off to Qatar for the Longines Global Champions Tour. The time difference means I leave at 8pm on Monday and arrive at 6pm on Tuesday. I check my show notes as we take off and enjoy a glass of champagne – to help me sleep, of course!



catch-up with the Irish – who knows, maybe I can tempt someone to a round of golf.

Thursday

A pretty quiet day, the most complicated part being the presentation of the vaulting teams. I'd placed it in the hands of my co-commentators, who did a top job. In commentating, the danger is of getting too relaxed when things go smoothly – that's when things go wrong! So time for a reminder – never take anything for granted, it leads to mistakes.

minds are not only on the biggest prize money of the week, but

also on packing, and checking out of hotels and onto flights. A delighted Ludger Beerbaum takes the €650,000 showjumping spoils and a Danish princess heads up the €100,000 dressage Grand Prix.

Prize-giving is the usual circus of dignitaries, and massive

lights and music. I used to hate orchestrating these, but with experience I am getting more relaxed about them all.



Tuesday

Eight hours' sleep, a little brunch and it's time to jump the body clock forward before we land. Qatar is amazing. I'm whisked off to the hotel – a far cry from the days of an old caravan in a field and showering in a nearby block. A quick meeting with the team, then off to bed again.

Wednesday

A rough night as my body wrestles with whether to get up, go to sleep or have lunch. The first morning determines how the week will work – taking into account logistics and protocol. There are plenty of familiar faces here, including London Olympics course designer Bob Ellis and his assistant designer, Kelvin Bywater. Nice to see Michael Whitaker win the main class today and he's delighted. A chat with Edwina Tops-Alexander, then a



A commentator's tools of the trade

Friday

The commentary team switches from vaulting to dressage. Anna Ross-Davies is the only British dressage rider here and at the end of the day, we all cram into our car for the ride home. Later, as I descend the staircase to the gala dinner, my phone rings. Can I introduce the night's speeches? Not my finest effort, but it ticks all the boxes. Big day tomorrow. Early(ish) night.

Saturday

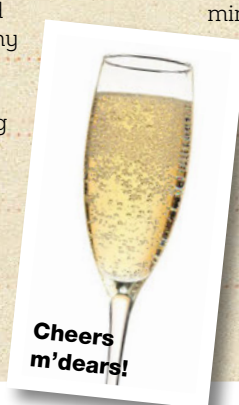
The final day of a competition is always interesting. Our

Sunday

Up at 5am and into the car. At the airport, I take advantage of the departure lounge and catch a few weary faces. I feel a pang of jealousy as they board the flight to London –

mine is bound back to the USA for the Wellington Grand Prix, worth €500,000 (£393,000).

Maybe a glass of fizz to celebrate, but I'm not sure if I'm toasting last week or the advent of the new one!



Cheers m'dears!